



THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION
DEVOTED TO BORDER HISTORY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 89.

Price, Five Cents.

BUFFALO BILL AND THE OUTCASTS OF YELLOW DUST CITY

OR
FIGHTING FOR LIFE IN THE BLIZZARD



BY
THE AUTHOR
OF "BUFFALO BILL"

THE STARVING WOLVES WERE ALREADY UPON THE DYING BEAST, AND BUFFALO BILL HAD TO USE HIS REVOLVERS QUICKLY TO DRIVE THEM OFF.



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Buffalo Bill and the Outcasts of Yellow Dust City;

OR

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By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

THE STARS OF YELLOW DUST CITY.

Yellow Dust City was a booming mining camp of the kind that congregated within its environs every sort of human kind to be found upon the far frontier.

There were honest men and thieves, gamblers, idlers, road agents under cover, hard-working men, and men who scorned to work, preferring to live by their wits and upon others.

The mines panned out well, coaches connected the place with other settlements eastward, but it was the end of the Pioneer Trail thus far.

Beyond was an unknown country save to the red man and a few daring scouts.

The dwellers in Yellow Dust were comfortably housed, and miners' cabins were to be found for miles around the center of population, which was some fifteen hundred souls, and some, I might justly say, were without souls.

Of course, gambling and fighting were the principal

amusements, and law and order were at a discount, save the law of might.

There were saloons galore, and each one had its gambling annex.

Several stores, a blacksmith, gunsmith, and a couple of taverns were the centers of attraction.

The principal store of the place was owned by the ex-soldier, Sule Ross, and the tavern was known as the Golden Arms, a pair of small revolvers of gold being the sign over the door, while beneath were the words:

"Touch me, if you dare!"

It was said that a number had gone mining for those little gold revolvers, with a result that they had proven most deadly, though but toys, for "Colonel" Camp, the landlord, knew how to protect his own.

Next to the Golden Arms was a saloon and gambling den combined, and Colonel Camp was the proprietor also.

It was known as "The Colonel's Game."

Though the tavern and the saloon were the best in Yellow Dust City, they could not have been much

worse, though it was said that the colonel and a few "special guests" lived well and had the best.

Where Cass Camp had secured his title of colonel no one knew. He dressed in a blue army suit, with brass buttons; wore a black slouch hat and gold cord, and the unfortunate man who failed to call him colonel never found favor in his eyes.

If a man behaved badly in the tavern or saloon, the colonel never himself played "bouncer," but called upon some well-known tough to do it, and that meant drinks free for one week at the bar.

It was also said that the colonel paid a man to "lie low" and kill the one who should attempt to steal the gold revolvers.

The man most respected in Yellow Dust City was "Sule Ross, the Store Boss," and "Boss Ross," as he was called.

That the word of Sule Ross went as pure gold all knew, and his undaunted courage, kindness to those who needed aid, the firm hand with the rough ones, were known and acknowledged.

There were other good men and true in Yellow Dust City, and there was a far larger element of an utterly reckless kind that were very dangerous.

What Sule Ross' position was in one way, Colonel Camp's was in another, and each held great influence.

But there were others who also held sway, a particularly successful miner, for instance, and more than all the man who stood at the head of the gambling fraternity.

The latter was a card sharp known as the "Shasta Sport," as well as the "Silver Sport," for he had the peculiarity of wearing a silver cord around his slouch hat, silver buttons upon his jaunty costume, carrying a handsome watch and chain of the same metal, wearing a silver ring representing a coiled snake with diamond head and eyes, and having his belt buckle solid, massive and beautifully molded in the same white metal.

His revolvers and bowie were also of silver mounting, and a scarfpin and star of diamonds were set in silver. When in full costume this denizen from Shasta sported full on his shirt front three sunflowers beautifully done in frosted silver and filigree, which, therefore, became the most conspicuous feature of his novel attire.

A singular peculiarity of this gamester was that he would only gamble for gold.

The gold, too, had to be in coin, and if he won, as he generally did, the man that lost had it impressed upon

him that he could only pay the man from Shasta in gold money.

This fact had gained for the gambler the added soubriquet of Gold Coin Sam.

This man was the most noted character in Yellow Dust City, and he had such a following of admirers as made him quite the "king pin" of the camp.

Sam's hand was ever in his pocket for charity, and the other was equally as ready to draw a gun, but never would draw a weapon until needed, and when drawn he used it with almost unerring precision.

But so sure was it that he "needed it" so often during his life in Yellow Dust City that he had become as much feared as he was admired.

When evening came the large shed saloon of "The Colonel's Game" gathered the crowds, and there the Sport from Shasta held reign with the other noted personages of Yellow Dust City, and seldom a night went by without the recording angel having to write down a human soul rushed into eternity from the mining camp known as Yellow Dust City.

CHAPTER II.

DENOUNCED.

"The Colonel's Game Saloon" was in full blast on a certain winter evening, and it was crowded to the doors, for word had been circulated around the camps of Yellow Dust City that an important event was to happen.

It was hinted that it was for the good of all honest men, and for the welfare of Yellow Dust City.

All honest and dishonest men, too, had gone there on the night specified, of course.

Notices had been stuck up at the Golden Arms, the colonel's saloon, the store of Sule Ross, and other places, so few, if any, in the miners' camp did not know that something out of the usual run was to take place that night.

The colonel was there, so also was Sule Ross, and the richest miner of Yellow Dust, Carl Waring, was with them, while the man from Shasta, Sunflower Sam, was not far away.

The four named had a serious look, but the crowd looked curious and expectant. What was going to happen, all wondered, but few appeared to know.

That he should not be suspected of being dishonest, and not having the welfare of Yellow Dust camps at heart, every miner, hanger-on and loafer was there.

When all were assembled Colonel Camp knocked loudly on the bar for order. Silence at once followed, and the colonel said:

"Gents, we are gathered here to-night upon a most important mission, and no honest man will object to my closing and locking the doors during the meeting, for we wish not to be disturbed by any going out or coming in—see?"

All apparently did "see," and there was a feeling of nervousness among many of them.

"I am no speech-maker," continued the colonel, "so I'll leave it to Boss Sule Ross to do the talking, and then all others present here who I will not name to do the acting, if it has to be done.

"Gents, you all know Boss Sule Ross, as square a man as I am myself, and who has the good of these camps at heart, just as I have."

The colonel was applauded for the double compliment he paid to himself, and Sule Ross was greeted with a shout that showed his popularity with all.

The doors were closed then, not a man daring to raise his voice against it, and in his frank, free-and-easy manner, Sule Ross said:

"Men, I have not much to say, but it will be to the point. If I tread on any man's toes, I hold myself responsible, for the time has come when the desperado element shall no longer run these camps.

"We are hundreds of men banded together in the midst of this wilderness, and the motive is with most of us to earn an honest living.

"We have left comfortable homes, those who loved us, and have risked our lives in our fight for fortune.

"But there are those who have fastened themselves upon us to rob us of what we work for, and to keep the camps in continual turmoil by their lawless acts and determination to ferment trouble.

"These are the ones I refer to, and I know that the time has come to strike a blow at these vampires and drive them from our midst.

"At a meeting of a dozen of the leading men in these camps, held several weeks ago, there was appointed a secret few as detectives, to ferret out those who have been robbing the miners, holding up the coaches, and cheating honest card players by marked cards, thus winning their money.

"These ferrets set to work, and have traced a great deal of these lawless acts to a band of men we all know, and upon them the doom of exile shall be pronounced,

giving them until noon to-morrow to leave Yellow Dust City.

"That we will not allow them to fatten upon other camps, we will send word at once to every mining camp and settlement in this far country, warning them not to allow them to enter their lines.

"Where they go, we care not, but they shall leave Yellow Dust City, and in the time specified, taking all their belongings with them."

A shout of approval was what followed the words of Sule Ross, and eyes were cast upon all sides to see upon whom the ban of exile had fallen.

Suddenly one man arose in the crowd. Every eye was upon him at once. He was a tall, well-formed man, with long hair and beard, and dressed rather better than those about him.

About his waist he wore a wide blue belt in which he carried his weapons, and altogether he was rather picturesque in appearance.

In a deep voice, he said:

"I, for one, beg to thank Merchant Ross and those who have backed him up in this good work for what has been done, and I can safely say that my immediate comrades, my band of Blue Belts, as you have called us, are ready to hold ourselves prepared to support him, with our lives, if necessary, in driving the desperadoes from this camp."

A cheer greeted these bold words, and then came in the clear voice of the Sport from Shasta:

"Burt Boyd, you and your Blue Belts are those that we have doomed to exile."

CHAPTER III.

THE DOOM OF THE BLUE BELTS.

A murmur, more like a deep growl of anger than surprise, ran around the large saloon when Sunflower Sam, the man from Shasta, told who it was that the Secret Vigilance Committee had denounced as lawless men and doomed to be driven from Yellow Dust City.

Burt Boyd was known to one and all, as were also the men who were leagued with him and were known as Blue Belts. The band numbered fifteen, and Burt Boyd was their leader.

They had come in a party into Yellow Dust, and had struck upon a gold claim in a canyon two miles from the Golden Arms. It was said by many that the claim was played out, was worthless, but the Blue Belts ap-

peared to think to the contrary, and to find at least some gold there.

They were a reckless lot of fellows, bold in their ways, fearless of consequences, could take their own part, and kept always in company, for seldom was it that less than four men were together.

What they got at the bar of the colonel's saloon they paid for, and when they took a meal at the Golden Arms down went their money.

They had come in a party into Yellow Dust, and had the best of horses; they lived well, for their bills at the store of Sule Ross were large, yet always promptly paid.

They were all card players, and were often called "the men of luck," for they seldom lost a game. When they did lose, they never flinched, and their money was ready to pay their losses.

Now and then they had been drawn into serious quarrels, but their backing was at hand promptly, and too good to allow them to be downed.

On Sunday they never worked, nor entered a saloon, nor touched a card. They would spend the day in resting, fishing or hunting.

With all this, they were looked upon with suspicion by many. They had too much money to be honest, it was whispered.

As a band, the Blue Belts had too much power, so something was wrong about them, beyond a doubt, concluded many of the denizens of the camp.

Nothing was known of their antecedents, and they never talked of themselves or their past. They were dangerous men, certainly, as a band of fifteen, and it was remarked that not one of them had ever been killed, when other men had fallen under their deadly aim.

Some other whispers went about that several of them had been recognized by miners as having been road agents on other Western trails.

Hence, stories about them had gone the rounds until it at last was said that they were nothing more than a band of outlaws secretly in Yellow Dust City to get what they could.

It was rumored that they played with marked cards, cheated at everything, and of late had been the ones who had so mysteriously robbed the cabins of the miners of hard-earned gold hidden away.

When, therefore, the Shasta Sport said what he did, telling Burt Boyd that he and his Blue Belts were the accused men, those who had heard these ugly rumors

against them had uttered a threatening exclamation that boded no good to them.

Instantly Burt Boyd flashed around upon the Sunflower Sport. His face was white, his eyes burning, and his right hand rested upon a revolver in his blue belt.

About him were his comrades, a dozen in number, for the camp of the Blue Belts was never left without some protection, and two were there.

Each one of the Blue Belts gazed upon their leader, and their demeanor showed that they were there to stand by him.

"Sunflower Sam, who is it that makes this charge against the Blue Belts?" demanded Burt Boyd savagely.

All awaited the answer in deathlike silence.

It came cool and sharp.

"I regret to say that I make it, Burt Boyd, for I will not sail under false colors. I am your accuser."

"You! A man I deemed my friend?"

"I am not one to shrink from duty, Boyd, strike whom my act may. At the meeting of the Secret Vigilantes I was chosen to send men out to spot or hunt down the worst law breakers in Yellow Dust City. Their reports were the same as my own decision, and I made my report in accordance with the facts.

"The Vigilantes acted upon it, and your doom was pronounced. You and your Blue Belt Brigade, as you name the band at your beck and call, are to get out of Yellow Dust by noon to-morrow."

"Suppose we refuse to go?"

"Then another doom than exile will be visited upon you," was the incisive answer.

"What is that?"

"You and each one of your band will be hanged," said the colonel, to whom the Shasta Sport turned for answer to Burt Boyd's question.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WARNING.

The wild yell that followed this announcement of Colonel Camp as to what would be the fate of the Blue Belts if they refused to leave the camps, checked Burt Boyd in what he seemed about to say.

His face was deadly pale, and in glancing at his comrades he saw that they felt their utter powerlessness to stem the tide setting against them.

The whole community seemed to be determined to

carry out the work of the Secret Vigilantes, when such men as Colonel Cass Camp, Sule Ross, the man from Shasta, and Miner Waring, were the ones who had made the move.

The Blue Belts had been denounced. They were the strongest of the bands in Yellow Dust City. They would be the ones to suffer for the many, the scape-goats for all the hard characters in the mines.

Just what they had been guilty of no one particularly cared, so that some one was to be punished to clear the atmosphere.

The better element present took this view of it, while the toughs took the idea that they must demand the doom of the Blue Belts to cover up their own deeds.

Many desperadoes then and there vowed to lead better lives.

When Burt Boyd and his men heard the fate that was to be theirs if they refused to go, they knew how hopeless they were in that mad crowd to resist. Wisely they did not attempt to do so, and Burt Boyd said:

"We can submit; but, in driving us out of these camps, you, the self-constituted vigilantes, who accuse us of crimes, yourself commit a crime in robbing us of our claim."

These were bold words, and instantly they were answered by the Shasta Sport, who retorted:

"You shall not say that, Burt Boyd, for I will pay you your price for your mine."

Another yell greeted this. The Sport was always the man to chip in at the right time.

"Their gold claim is said to be worthless," called out the colonel, "and yet you offer to pay their price for it!"

"I mean within reason what three competent judges shall say it is worth."

"How quickly you eat your words, Sunflower Sam," sneered Burt Boyd.

"No, sir, no one shall say that!" came the answer. "I will pay you your price!"

Again the Shasta Sport was cheered.

"If you are good for the sum?"

"Name it!"

"There are men here who claim that it is worthless, but it is not."

"Name your price!"

"If I named its value in reality you could not buy, nor could any other man in Yellow Dust City."

"I ask you to name your price!"

"One hundred thousand dollars."

"That gives me full claim to it?"

"Yes."

"With the signature of each one of you outlawed?"

"Certainly."

"I will pay you."

"When and how?"

"Right here, sir, in United States greenbacks, for you can carry bills for that big amount more readily than you can such a quantity of gold."

"All right; we accept."

"Then I'll draw up the papers."

Pen, ink and paper were forthcoming, and, leaning upon the bar, the man from Shasta wrote the transfer.

"Here it is; now sign it!"

Burt Boyd and his men, pale, yet calm, took their position in line, while Sunflower Sam called out:

"Colonel, bring me my satchel from your strong box."

The colonel disappeared through a door back of the bar that led into the Golden Arms, and soon returned bearing a small satchel cleverly wired over and doubly locked by padlocks and chains.

Opening it with a couple of keys he took from his pocket, the Shasta Sport drew out half a dozen rolls of crisp bills secured by rubber bands.

From one after the other of these he counted out the money until he stopped in the middle of the fourth roll.

"Here is the amount, Boyd; count the bills for yourself, and you see I still have something left." And the Shasta Sport smiled grimly, while the crowd stared.

"Do you want a partner, Sam?" called out Miner Waring.

"No, I always play a lone hand, Waring," was the smiling response.

The bills were carefully counted by Burt Boyd and one of his men, and, being mostly in large sums, it did not take long.

"Are you satisfied?"

"I am."

"Then, Ross, you had best state the sentence again to the Blue Belts, for if they make a mistake it will be fatal to them."

Sule Ross at once advanced, and said:

"I am sorry, Boyd, that this blow falls upon you and your comrades alone in this instance, as we know there are many more who should be punished also.

"But you are an organized band, the strongest in the camps, and we sentence you first, and hope that it will be a warning.

"We give you your lives, and Sunflower Sam has

generously paid you for your claim; but to the other lawbreakers like yourselves, I wish to say that the Secret Vigilantes are still at work, and the doom that falls upon the next will be death, for to-night they have their warning to break off from their crimes."

Here a roar of approval broke in upon the speaker, but he continued:

"You are sentenced to leave this camp, to seek refuge in no other camp or settlement, and to leave this part of the country never to return, under penalty of death.

"To-morrow at noon, with your horses and belongings and what supplies you care to take along, you are to leave.

"Such is your doom, and I trust it will be a warning to you for the future."

Another cheer from the crowd, and then a voice shouted:

"No, they are outlaws, and must meet just punishment.

"Hang them! Hang them all!"

CHAPTER V.

SCALPLOCK SAM. •

The eyes of every man in the saloon turned upon the one who had suddenly demanded more dire punishment for the Blue Belts than driving them out of the mining camps.

He had risen in the center of the crowd, and all knew him at a glance.

The thought of many was at once that he was equally a disturbing element in the community with the Blue Belts.

The demand to hang them had fallen with startling surprise upon Burt Boyd and his men.

They had at once huddled together like sheep toward one corner of the bar.

No one knew better than they the fickleness of a crowd in a mining camp.

They could be readily swayed to reverse their decision and decide that death alone should be their punishment. They drew together for self-preservation, to defend their lives as best they could.

The man who demanded their lives was by far the most deserving of the name of desperado of any one in the mines. He was born bad, and grew worse with increasing years.

He had boasted of his bad record where he had come

from, had openly, when drinking, said that there was a price on his head, and dared men to try and win it.

Bold, fearless, desperate, a card sharp of the worst kind, strong as an ox, quick as a cat, and a deadly hand with revolver and knife, he had run amuck at times and found no one to attempt to check his career. To attempt and fail was sure death.

He had been wounded badly by two men, both of whom he had killed, then treated the crowd, and finished his game of cards, winning it, too, before he sought the aid of "Old Rhubarb," the one doctor in Yellow Dust City, and who was making more money than any one miner, it was said, by keeping the people from any diseases save the "bullet fever," an extremely common illness in the camps throughout Nevada, and frequently proving to be an epidemic.

"Scalplock Sam" was the name that this daring desperado was known by, he having honestly won the unenviable name from the fact that though he did not actually take the scalp of an enemy, he always did cut off a lock of his victim's hair.

"Jist to keep him in remembrance," he was wont to say.

Like an Indian, he was proud to show these locks of hair, having carefully plaited each one, tied them all together with a red ribbon, and wore them as an ornament swinging to his belt.

Four-fifths of the people in Yellow Dust wanted Scalplock Sam dead, but no one cared to undertake to kill him.

He had a following, too. They were few in number, but they also were bold, bad men of the same stripe as their leader, and the quintette made a full hand that no one cared to play against.

When seated idly in the saloon, at times Scalplock Sam's amusement seemed to be in counting over the locks of hair swinging to his belt, and in this way he had been careful to allow lookers-on to count them.

In this way it was reported that Scalplock Sam had killed fifteen men, or, at least, wore that many locks of hair.

When, therefore, this bad man arose in the crowd and shouted for the death of the band of Blue Belts, men drew their breath with excitement, for they knew that the trouble was not over, but just about to begin.

The Blue Belts knew their man, and hope of escape faded from their hearts, for well they realized his desperate character, and that he had equally as desperate a following.

Many saw the motive. Scalplock was playing a bold game. His purpose was to stand well in the community.

If he could lead a deadly crusade against the Blue Belts, he would use it as a cloak to hide his own crimes.

Would he carry the crowd with him? was the question in many minds.

Certainly he had made a bold play for popularity and favor, and was going to ally himself upon the side of law and order.

He was going to chip in with the Secret Vigilantes, and thus be on the same side himself.

So it was he had risen and shouted:

"Hang them all!"

His followers, the four known to be his immediate pards, promptly arose with him and echoed in chorus: "Hang the Blue Belts!"

This brought other men to their feet with the same cry.

Scalplock had set the fatal ball rolling, and it gathered in size as it went along; but suddenly there came a check.

A voice rang through the saloon, and it was the Sport from Shasta who spoke:

"I say no!" he shouted in no mistaken tones.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SHASTA SPORT'S STAND-OFF.

The stand taken by the other Sam—Sunflower Sam—turned every eye upon him.

He did not flinch under the gaze, but boldly met the scrutiny of the crowd.

A silence followed his words, broken then by the call of Scalplock Sam:

"Who says no?"

Trouble was brewing, all knew. The situation was getting more critical all around.

The Blue Belts held their position, huddled together, and there was no doubt but that they intended to fight it out, and not tamely submit to the determination of Scalplock Sam to hang them.

The desperado and the Shasta Sport, through some strange accident, had never yet been pitted against each other. They had once played cards, big money had been staked, and Sam from Shasta had won.

After that Scalplock Sam had left him severely alone—discovering that where he could manipulate the cards

with skill, the other Sam could do so with even more skill.

Now Scalplock had taken a stand against the Blue Belts, and a glance showed that he had a very considerable following in the crowd.

Many had suffered both from petty and large robberies, and so to visit upon them no other punishment save exile from the mining country they did not believe sufficient.

They should hang, and Scalplock Sam had voiced their thoughts.

When the reply of the Shasta Sport was heard, all eyes turned upon the rival Sam.

He saw his chance, pushed his way toward the Sport, and when within twenty feet of him he halted.

His four followers had crowded close behind him.

"See here, Sunflower, you no doubt means well, but you is away off, and we says them Blue Belts has been ther terror of these camps; they has robbed us, cheated at cards, and done lots of things better men has been hanged for."

"One or two men might have been hanged, Scalplock, but not fifteen—a number that would cause the government to put a fort right here in Yellow Dust mighty quick!"

The response of the Sunflower Sport caused a sensation. A fort was the last thing the miners wanted to keep them from law-breaking.

But, nothing daunted, Scalplock replied:

"We can take care of ourselves, with the aid of the United States, and I tell you these men must hang, or they will be turned loose to become outlaws and cause more trouble on the trails than there is now."

"Well, we are determined to purify these camps, we of the Secret Vigilantes, and we have decided what should be done with these men, and that settles it."

"I says it don't! and you hain't ther boss here."

"The best men in these camps are with me."

"Hang these men and I'll be with you."

"Thanks—for nothing. I don't ask or need your aid."

"Then I'll act on my own account."

"What will you do?"

"Hang them Blue Belts."

"I'm afraid you are going to bite off more than you can conveniently chew. The Secret Vigilantes have sentenced the Blue Belts, and they will see that they are not dealt with contrary to their wishes."

"See here, Shasta, you talk like a fool."

Matters were drawing to a climax, as all saw, so a lane was slowly opening between the desperado and the Sunflower Sport.

Those who had intended to back up Scalplock now fell aside, for they did not like the Shasta Sport's reference to the soldiers coming into their midst. Many there wished to keep well out of sight of the officers of the law and of the army.

The four comrades of Scalplock still stood near him, though they had wisely stepped two on each side, not to be in the way to stop bullets should revolvers be suddenly drawn.

Scalplock, accordingly, stood alone in the center of a lane eight feet wide, rough-clad men being the barrier upon either side.

The Blue Belts had gathered close to the Sport from Shasta.

There was no backdown in them, for their lives were at stake.

The colonel, Sule Ross, Carl Waring and others were close at hand, and watched.

In answer to the last words of Scalplock, the Shasta Sport smiled, and replied:

"You will be the fool, Scalplock, if you raise a hand to hang these men, for I'll shoot you dead in your tracks at the first move you make against them.

"Now, go ahead!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE CLIMAX.

"Do you mean that as a challenge, Sunflower?" roared the other Sam.

"I mean it as a warning," was the quiet response.

"It is well you don't mean to challenge me."

"Take it as you choose, Samuel," returned the Shasta Sport.

The crowd was silent as though already at a funeral, and no one could understand Scalplock's delay in acting. He appeared to be fencing for time or position, it was apparent.

The Shasta Sport still leaned carelessly upon the bar, but his hand dropped very near the butt of the nearest revolver to his grasp.

Scalplock looked about him. He saw his four comrades, but he wished to get a look at the crowd.

Would they back him up? was what he wished to decide.

After a quick scrutiny he knew that he must play a

lone hand—that the law and order men were in the majority.

He could not back down, however. Something must be done, and quickly, so he made the venture:

"See here, Shasta, there ain't no quarrel between you and me, but it's the Blue Belts I wants ter see downed, for I'm on the side of justice."

The Sport laughed, and a hum went through the crowd.

Was the man whom others feared showing the white feather?

Had Scalplock decided to back down when the other was his adversary?

Before the desperado could go on to state his case, Burt Boyd spoke up quickly:

"Sunflower, I thank you for your stand in our favor, but we do not wish you to get into trouble on our account, so I am willing to meet Scalplock right here and now in a fight with any weapons he may select, and that will settle it."

A yell of approval greeted this offer.

The leader of the Blue Belts showed clear grit, whatever his crimes might be.

The Sport turned to him, and replied:

"I appreciate your offer, but decline it, Burt Boyd, for if I cannot, as one of the Secret Vigilantes, protect a condemned man, then we are weak, indeed, as a law and order committee."

Another shout greeted this stand of the man from Shasta, for all saw the force of his position.

But Scalplock broke in with:

"That's what I'll do, Burt Boyd. I'll fight you, for——"

"You'll do no such thing! You will fight me if you fight at all, or you will back down like the coward I believe you to be, Scalplock!"

There was no mistaking the Sport's words, and he had suddenly faced the desperado, revolver in hand.

Scalplock was cowed; but if he showed the white feather now, Yellow Dust City would be quickly made too hot for him.

Glancing at his four pards, then came his answer:

"I'll fight you, then, Sunflower, if it is to be a fair fight and no trickery."

"What do you mean?"

"These people all seem to be your friends, not mine."

"Those who are honest men and on the side of right are my friends, but those who wish to have Yellow Dust City continue to be a disgrace and human slaugh-

ter pen will side with you, Scalplock, and I am willing, if it must be, for the test to come between the law and order men and the law-breakers, right now and here."

Again a cheer, and a look over the crowd showed that no one was anxious to be among the law-breakers.

"Come, let this be settled now, Scalplock, or back down, for the Shasta Sport is not the man to go back on his word," the colonel chipped in.

This chimed in with the humor of the crowd, and Scalplock saw it.

Instantly he sprang a surprise upon all, even his four pards, for he said:

"I yield, pards, for if I insist upon a fight with Sunflower I place myself among the law-breakers, and we give a black eye to the very cause good men wish to uphold. The Secret Vigilantes rule here, and I yield."

He stepped forward and held forth his hand, which the Shasta Sport promptly grasped, at the same time glancing over the crowd and saying:

"Don't crowd him, pards, because he acknowledged he was wrong, or there may be trouble ahead for those who do.

"Come, gentlemen, and take something with me."

The ready invitation was an inspiration, for it checked all grumbling of the dissatisfied at not having seen a man killed.

"You will join us?" and the Shasta Sport turned to Burt Boyd, who answered:

"You proved our friend in time of need. We will drink health and prosperity to you, Sunflower Sam."

CHAPTER VIII.

TO THE DEATH VALLEY.

The Blue Belts dashed off their drinks with their eyes upon the Shasta Sport.

They seemed to regard him alone as their only friend.

Without a word or look to others they filed out of the saloon, followed by a burst of applause at their departure, which they could not mistake for aught else but delight at their going.

Once outside, they moved at quick pace to the store of Sule Ross, for they were anxious to make their purchases necessary for their needs in their forced exile.

Provisions in quantity, blankets, small tents, and all else that could be of service were bought and paid for, along with half a dozen horses to carry their outfit.

These things were packed, and the animals were led to the cabin home of the Blue Belts.

Their claim was in a little valley, near its head. They had there three cabins, one being in the center, and used for kitchen, dining and lounging-room, the other two for sleeping rooms.

They had a score of good horses. These were brought up, saddled, and the extra ones used as pack animals.

At midnight they were all ready for their departure.

Mounting, they rode away in the gloom of night, Burt Boyd at their head.

No one they could see was visible to note their departure, and yet, crouching by the side of the trail, was a spy observing their every movement.

As they filed by him and passed out of sight, this shadower arose, and, shaking his fist after them, said aloud:

"Go on, Blue Belts, into outlaw life; but you go to your doom, for, slip away as you do, like thieves in the night, you will be followed and tracked to a doom that death were preferable to."

The man drew back out of sight, and the Blue Belts rode on.

Coming to where several trails branched off, Burt Boyd drew rein. All then halted, but not a word was uttered.

The leader seemed at a loss which trail to take.

After some moments of silence the man behind him spoke:

"Which trail will it be, captain?"

"I do not know," was the low reply.

"You have not decided where to go, then, sir?"

"No; it was all so sudden, you know; I have not had time to think."

"The right goes to the fort, you know?"

"Yes, but we do not wish to go there."

"The left is the stage trail eastward."

"Yes, but we are not renegades."

"And it also leads up into the Death Valley Mountains."

"Pards, that is our trail," then announced Burt Boyd.

"To the Death Valley, sir?" repeated several voices, in unison.

"Yes, we will go there, for no one dare follow us there, and we can have time to think and to act."

"But, it is death, they say, for any human being to go there, Captain Boyd!" urged one.

"It is sure death for any of this band to remain where we are."

"True," and all seemed to assent.

"It is sure death for us to go to any other mining camp."

"Very true," they had to admit.

"We dare not seek a settlement anywhere in this country."

"No, not in this whole region."

"Many in Yellow Dust City think they have driven us into outlawry. That remains for them to find out."

"They will find out to their cost some day," uttered a determined voice.

"Yes, and to have time to think, to act, we will go to Death Valley, for wood, water and grass are plentiful there; and even should the winter catch us there, we can stand it, I am sure."

"To Death Valley it is, then," acquiesced one.

Others chimed in also, and, thus supported, Burt Boyd took the centre trail and once more led the way through the darkness.

On, on, they went, fearing no pursuit, and yet upon their track had started, the next night, a merciless band of twenty-seven men—men who had gone on the trail with masked faces and bent upon driving the band of Blue Belts to their doom.

CHAPTER IX.

ENTER BUFFALO BILL.

"Well, good pard, if we get caught in this storm without shelter the chances are that coyotes will pick our bones."

The speaker was Buffalo Bill, then chief of scouts in the great Northwest.

He was a hundred miles from the fort, or help, and a storm of desperate fierceness was threatening.

The scout had just escaped one severe blizzard with his life, and was hastening to reach the fort, but the tempest was gathering, and long experience told him that man and beast must die if they were to be exposed to snow, chilling winds and below zero weather.

"I can dare danger of death at man's hands, but this fighting nature makes the odds too great against us, old pard."

"But we'll not say die until the last, will we?"

As before, he addressed his horse, his faithful pard.

The scene was in the wilds of the mountains, and Buffalo Bill's only chance was to seek some sheltered

nook in a canyon, and there do the best he could to keep from freezing until the blizzard was over, when, if he had strength, he could try and reach the fort.

"Ah! But those outlaws will have to pay for bringing me here in the face of winter."

"But, then, if they have no retreat here, they, too, will perish."

"I wonder if they would take me in were I to happen upon their den?"

"I would not like particularly to try them, for they might be only too anxious to do so—ah; there is a trail!"

"It is not a very fresh one, but I'll follow where it leads, for it cannot go far, and the horses were shod, so Indians did not make it."

He glanced down attentively at the well-marked trail of a dozen horses, made several days before, then looked anxiously at the gathering storm, and started off at a gallop.

He was splendidly mounted, had a rifle and belt of arms, a large roll of blankets in rubber covering, and a good supply of provisions and camping outfit.

The horse did not seem to regard his heavy burden, but went along as rapidly as though he felt shelter was not far distant.

A ride of a mile up a narrow canyon with high cliffs upon either side, brought the scout suddenly into a basin several acres in size.

There was a lake there, and plenty of timber, the very place for shelter.

But the eyes of the scout were not fixed upon the spot as a sheltered retreat, but at a strange sight his eyes had suddenly fallen upon.

A camp was before him. It was a camp of white men, and they were lying and crouching around a fire.

They were all the picture of despair. Haggard-faced, sunken-eyed, thinly-clad, half-starved, miserable wretches, they looked, a picture of utter woe and despair.

At sight of the horseman appearing so suddenly before them, they did not move. Some muttered words were heard, and every eye was upon him.

They had a rickety shelter of boughs, and in the basin several horses were staked out to feed, while a number of saddles were where the men were.

Instantly Buffalo Bill spurred forward and drew rein right in front of them. His eyes seemed fascinated at what they gazed upon, and from his lips most emphatically broke the cry:

"My God!"

Not one of the group of men spoke. There were a dozen of them, crouching about the fire, and a form lay upon the ground, face upturned, hands clasped upon the heart—dead.

"Are you the men driven from Yellow Dust City by the miners," asked Buffalo Bill.

"We are," was the reply of one of the men.

"You were secretly robbing your fellow-miners, and were given your choice of going into the mountains in the face of approaching winter or to suffer death by hanging?"

"That was it," said the man who had before spoken.

"Outlawed from all camps, you came here?"

"Yes, to die."

"If your worst foes saw you now they would pity you."

"Our foes have no pity. Are you our foe also, Buffalo Bill?"

"You know me, though I do not recall having met one of you before."

"But you have, though, no matter when or where."

"Are you our foe, Buffalo Bill?"

"I was sent to follow your trail, to see that you did not halt in the mountains."

"We have halted."

"How could you do otherwise?"

"God only knows. We are hunted men, wild beasts as it were, and yet we are now doomed."

"From my inmost heart I pity you!" said Buffalo Bill, earnestly.

CHAPTER X.

A CRIPPLED CREW.

"Your pity, Buffalo Bill, is the first word of sympathy that has fallen upon our ears," said the spokesman of the wretched group.

"But why do I find you thus, for it is but two weeks since you left Yellow Dust City?"

"Two weeks to men who have gone through with what we have is an age."

"But what has happened that I see you thus, for you surely had horses, food and a camp outfit, for I was told that you were driven away well supplied, and the miners considered that they had been merciful in not taking your lives."

"They lie! It would have been far more merciful to have hanged us!" cried the man, excitedly, and, as he

rose slowly to his feet, he held out his right arm, from which the hand had been severed!

"Look at me, Buffalo Bill," he continued, almost wildly. "Do you see that my right hand is gone?"

"Yes."

"It was cut off by those merciful miners."

"Do you see this man shivering upon my left? His right foot has been cut off! The next to him has lost an arm, the next a leg, the other a hand, and so it goes on around the circle. Each one has been maimed for life—a life, thank God! that is near its ending now, for we cannot last long, no, not long now; though we have prayed to live if only to have revenge, a revenge that is our due before Heaven."

"See that man there—he is dead! His leg was cut off and he died an hour ago."

"Oh, God! But we have been made to suffer, Buffalo Bill, for they scarred our backs with the lash, hounded us on, and at the last they maimed us as you see and left us here to die."

The man dropped down again by the fire, exhausted by his story of woe, excitement and suffering.

Buffalo Bill's face was white, and with quivering lips he cried:

"This is terrible! No matter what were your crimes, you did not deserve this unparalleled suffering and wrong, and at the hands of men who called themselves merciful."

"I have heard many crimes laid upon you, have heard of your red deeds, of your robberies of poor miners, but in the sight of Heaven I swear you did not deserve this monstrous punishment."

"But come! Do not give up, for, bad off as you all are, it might be worse."

"Those of you who can must work, must help me, and I will save you if a man can do it."

"Do you see those clouds? A few more hours and they will break upon us, and you are sure to perish if not protected better than you are."

"There is an ax, and I can do wonders with that, while I have food enough for all, at least for several days."

The voice of Buffalo Bill rang out like a trumpet, and his cheery words and manner brought a feeble cheer from the crippled crew, and they at once were inspired with hope and strength.

Springing from his horse, Buffalo Bill drew off the saddle, staked him out, set a pot of coffee on to boil,

and then seizing the ax he went into the timber and made it fly as only a woodsman can.

Pines, cedars and saplings were cut down, and the men with one arm dragged them against the cliff, where the scout said they would build their shelter.

The men that had lost a foot balanced themselves as best they could, hopped around, and, strengthened by the coffee, forgot their pains in their work.

In the midst of their work up the canyon dashed a herd of deer, seeking shelter.

They halted in surprise at the camp, and instantly the repeating rifle of the scout began to rattle and one, two, three fell dead.

Leaving them where they had fallen, to be looked after later, Buffalo Bill went on with his work.

Two, three hours passed, and the shelter was finished, the fire built in it in a crevice in the cliffs, pine straw spread for beds, and all the blankets the poor wretches had left to them placed where they would give the most comfort.

The other shelter was patched up for the horses, the deer were dressed and hung up, and the scout's supplies gotten out to give all a good, square meal.

It was needed, for the men were upon the verge of starvation.

"We are ready for the storm, men!" cried Buffalo Bill, cheerily, as all that could be done was attended to, and a moment after he called out:

"And here it is upon us!"

The black clouds had trailed low, and came sweeping over the mountain range with irresistible fury.

The darkness of night had fallen upon the scene, for the sun, near its setting, had been blotted out by the inky blackness of the heavens.

With a glance at the shelter of the horses, another at the one he had worked so hard to build, to see if they would stand the force of the gale, Buffalo Bill was glad to realize that they would, for did they not death would be the fate of all, for the weather had dropped down near the zero mark.

"This canyon is a safe shelter, and our houses will stand.

"My! But this is an awful bitter night," and Buffalo Bill was glad to go into the narrow opening that led to the cheerful protection within.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SCOUT SAMARITAN.

The indoors was only cheerful by contrast with the without, Buffalo Bill was compelled to admit to himself.

He closed the opening that served as a door, threw more wood upon the fire in the large crevice in the rock that served as a fireplace and chimney, and the heat thrown out took the chill off of the little shelter. Around the fire were grouped the men, and they had left a space in one corner for the scout.

The fire lit up their haggard faces, and the scene was not a happy one.

The saddles had been packed up at the heads of their blanket beds, wood in plenty was piled up on either side; all knew that they had been saved from a terrible death by Buffalo Bill, their foe.

But the poor cripples did not so regard him now, and they gazed at him with admiration and gratitude as he came in and dropped down in the space left for him.

"This is a fearful night, men.

"Just hark to the fierce wind, and how the sleet drives against our house; but, never fear, we are all right here, and can weather it without suffering."

"Except yourself, sir, there is the best one off in our lot," said a man, bitterly, and he motioned to the rear of the cabin where lay the form of their dead comrade, for they had not had a moment's time to bury him.

"Now, don't get gloomy, pard, for I consider this first-class, and I'll do all I can for you," replied Buffalo Bill, cheerily, and yet there was a heavy weight upon his heart as he looked around upon that wretched crew.

Each one was naturally suffering much with their severed limbs, for the cruel work had only been done several weeks before.

The stumps of arms and legs had been bound up as best they could, with what could be obtained, and Buffalo Bill, seeing this, said:

"Now, the first thing is for me to do what I can for your wounds.

"I am no doctor, but I have seen more wounds than most of them have, and, fortunately, always go well prepared, for I have a case along, in which there is lint, bandages, salves, and all I need.

"Come, pard, you seem to be the worst sufferer, so I'll look to you first."

Water was heated, the awkwardly bandaged leg taken in charge, and the good samaritan began work.

"This was not a bad amputation at any rate, and the one who did it was a surgeon beyond doubt," said the scout.

"We do not know, sir, for he was completely masked," said Burt Boyd, the leader of the party.

"He was masked?" asked Buffalo Bill, in surprise.

"Yes, sir."

"Why was that?"

"All of them were."

"Those who pursued you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you did not know them?"

"Not one."

"How many were there?"

"Twenty-seven."

"They were miners, of course?"

"They were men of the mines, sir."

"That means you do not know their occupation, though they were from the mines?"

"When was this done?"

"Three weeks ago."

"Where?"

"In Death Valley."

"Ah!"

"Did you go there?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why?"

"We thought there at least we could rest in safety."

"You know the stories told of Death Valley?"

"Oh, yes. It was on account of what was said of the valley that we went there."

"Poor fellows! You did not expect to be tracked there?"

"No, sir."

"How did you expect to live there?"

"We had ample supplies with us, supposed we could get more, game was there in abundance, and you know it is said that gold was found there."

"Yes, and you were willing to take all risks and hunt gold?"

"We were, sir."

"And those men, twenty-seven in number, you say, trailed you there?"

"Yes, sir."

"Coming from Yellow Dust City?"

"We do not know, sir."

"We awoke to find our camp surrounded with armed men, and we surrendered under false promises or we would have fought it out, and, ah! How much better

it would have been for us to have died then, than to suffer as we have!"

"And after your surrender?"

"We were bound hand and foot, and this doom was visited upon us," and Burt Boyd held up his right arm with the hand severed at the wrist.

"Others suffered worse than I even, as you see for yourself, and those among us who are fortunate are the dead, like poor Marcy there."

"Then others are dead?"

"Yes, we were fifteen, and the maiming, with cold, hunger, and despair took five off."

"Who will be the next to go, God only knows, and none of us care, for human nature can bear no more."

"Men, I pity you, and the wrongs you have suffered shall not go unpunished, for, be your crimes what they may, this is a greater one against you," and Buffalo Bill spoke with deadly earnestness.

One by one the leg or arm of the poor wretches was dressed by the scout, and each man felt far less pain, far more comfortable when it was done.

In spite of the one blanket left to them, those of the dead were brought into service, and with the scout's generously sharing his own, the poor fellows felt that they would be fairly comfortable upon their pine straw beds.

A substantial supper had also given them renewed strength, and Buffalo Bill having piled more logs upon the fire, said:

"Men, this storm will last several days, but when it ends I shall start for the fort."

"No wagon can reach you here, so here you may have to remain all winter; but I will come back and bring with me supplies, blankets, and warm clothing for you, and more, my pards, the surgeon scout, Dr. Frank Powell, I know will accompany me, and see to your wounds, for some of you need attention that only a skilled surgeon can give."

"But, brace up, and all will yet come well," and the scout turned into his blankets for the night with the words echoing in his ears:

"Buffalo Bill, you are, indeed, a good Samaritan!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE LOST MINERS.

The storm did last several days, and the canyon was blocked with snow.

But Buffalo Bill swung the ax hard each day and

piled up within reach a lot of wood that would last for weeks.

He also improved the shelter as best he could against another storm, and did all that was possible for the protection of the unfortunate band of cripples that had fallen so strangely under his care.

With pick and shovel he had dug a grave for the dead comrade of the unfortunates, and the very next day he had again to face the merciless wind and driving sleet to make another grave.

One more unfortunate had let go life's cable, and was free from his sufferings.

With the third day the storm broke, the sun shone out warm and bright, and its influence was at once felt.

The horses were glad to get out and feed, and Buffalo Bill had no difficulty in finding half a dozen deer to bring down with his rifle.

Provisions were growing scant, and the scout's supply would last but a week longer, for he had to take some for his trail to the fort.

But, well and strong himself, he was self-sacrificing, and barely took food enough for two days.

"You distress us by going with so little, sir," said Burt Boyd.

"Never mind me, for you need all the nourishment you can get in your present condition.

"I will get along all right, for the further I go, the easier traveling it will be, and I hope to be back in a few days, so keep up your courage, and watch for my return."

The dawn was just creeping up the canyon the next morning when Buffalo Bill had his breakfast, bade farewell to the band of hunted men, and, mounting his horse, rode away on his long and dangerous trail to the fort.

It was by no means easy traveling, but horse and rider were game, and struggled on, and night found them some thirty miles on their way.

It was a cold and uncomfortable camp for the scout, but his horse found grass in plenty, and he did as best he could.

The second night found him about half the distance to the fort, and his supplies would only last until breakfast the following morning.

As he was looking for a sheltered spot in which to camp, his horse gave a low neigh, and a moment after the scout saw the glimmer of a fire ahead.

Then another and another came into view.

Could it be possible that a party of cavalry on the scout had been belated by the storm, he wondered.

Then he remembered that Yellow Dust City was only about fifty miles away, and perhaps the storm had overtaken some miners from that camp, for he knew of nothing else that would account for the fires, unless a band of Indians had been snowed in.

If Indians, he knew he had to be careful, for they would long for his scalp.

If miners, he would be all right, which would also be the case if they were soldiers.

Then the thought came to him that there were prowling bands of road agents along the Overland trails, and they might have a retreat up in those mountains.

All things considered, he knew that he must act with great caution.

Night was coming on, and he rode slowly toward the camp-fire.

Soon he saw that it was a camp of white men.

They were not soldiers he saw at a glance.

They were not outlaws, for they were too numerous for a band of road agents.

They, therefore, must be miners.

With this belief he rode up to the camp and hailed.

The men sprang to their feet in surprise, and one called out:

"Who are you and from whence do you come?"

Convinced that they were miners caught out in the storm, Buffalo Bill said:

"I am an army scout and on my way to Fort Rescue."

A wild cheer greeted these words, and the men rushed from about the fires to greet the scout.

He saw that they were in miners' garb, but their faces were drawn and suffering, and all seemed to be in distress.

"Who are you, pards?" he asked, glancing over the group.

"A party of prospectors out from Yellow Dust City. We got caught in the storm ten days ago, lost our way in the mountains, the second blizzard nearly killed the whole outfit, our provisions are about gone, and we know nothing as to where we are, and another day will do us up."

"Not so bad as that, for I will guide you to Yellow Dust City."

A yell answered this assertion, and a man asked:

"Can you do it?"

"I can."

"Do you really know where you are, with the snow scattered over the country as it is?"

"Oh, yes, perfectly."

"Then you must be Buffalo Bill, the scout?"

"That is what I am called."

Another yell of joy, and the men gathered around the scout grasping his hand, and acting in their delight like children turned out of school.

"When will we get there, for our horses are nearer dead than we are," asked the leader.

Buffalo Bill glanced over the crowd of upturned faces, then to the horses in the background, and said:

"My advice is to start at once, for another storm is threatening, and we have no time to lose. for, if caught in a blizzard, you are doomed."

"But can you find your way at night?"

"Oh, yes; and taking the risk of going is better than the certainty of death by staying here," was the reply.

Ten minutes after the half-starved men mounted their almost used-up horses and followed Buffalo Bill through the darkness out over the trackless land in the struggle for life.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TRAIL OF DEATH.

Buffalo Bill had been right about another storm threatening, for as they rode out of the timber all could see that the skies were becoming overcast with clouds, and no longer a star was visible.

This made the darkness greater, but the unerring guide held on his way without hesitation, and the men followed with perfect confidence, for the name of Buffalo Bill alone had given them hope.

They had ample clothing and blankets for any ordinary weather, and had come out well supplied, they said, for a short prospecting tour in the mountains, but the first storm that had belated them had caused them to lose their way, and the second one had delayed them until their provisions were gone, and they were staring death straight in the face when Buffalo Bill found their camp.

With horses broken down and half starved for want of grass, their own supplies gone, the cold intense, and not knowing where they were, their doom was sealed, and it was but a question of a short while more when they would have given up and lain down to die.

But on through the night over the frozen ground rode their guide.

A ridge was ahead of them, and all drew a sigh of relief when Buffalo Bill struck unerringly a canyon that cut it in twain.

This proved that he knew just what he was about.

A halt was made in some cedars in the canyon, fires built, and the last morsels of food passed around, the scout putting in his little supply with the others.

Helped by the meager food, warmed by the fire, and with their horses given a feed off the grass found in the canyon where the wind had swept the snow away, they again mounted and pushed on once more.

They saw that the scout had increased his pace, and a glance upward at the skies, growing blacker and blacker, and listening to the rising wind, told the cause.

All through the night the guide pushed on, seldom at fault, after a halt of a minute now and then, when momentarily at a loss, not a word would be said.

The dawn broke cold, cheerless, and threatening.

There was no food now, nothing for man or beast; silent as specters, suffering, fearing, hoping, with their whole trust placed in the cloaked form ahead, the men followed, struggling for life, yet dreading death.

They were so completely lost themselves, so worn out, cold, and hopeless, they could hardly believe that Buffalo Bill even could save them.

At last there was a cry from behind the long line.

The rear horse had gone down never to rise again.

"Don't stop to urge him, for he cannot get up.

"Send his rider here to mount behind me!"

The order came from the scout, but the rider was hurt, shivering with cold, and could not walk.

Buffalo Bill rode to the rear rapidly, swung the man up behind him, and spurred to the front again, his horse not appearing to mind the double weight.

The men saw their leader push on.

He had called out cheering words to them as he rode by them.

Suddenly back came the words:

"An hour more, men, and you are safe!"

The men gave a cheer, and presently one called out:

"He is right, boys! See! Do you not know that hill, the Tower Rock?"

Another cheer showed that the men had recognized the tower-like rock indicated.

But, just then, the snow began to fall. It came in gusts at first, then steadily, then began to drive sav-

agely into their faces. It fell so thick and fast, came so fiercely, that they could not see a rod about them.

But the unerring guide held on.

He seemed to be guided by something they could not see.

They did not know that long experience was proving his ally, and he was going along by watching the ground, seeing just where the trail should go, and not trying to observe distant surroundings.

Another horse went down, then another, and their riders found mounts behind others, until their animals also failed them.

At last came the order:

"Let the men riding the weakest horses slip from their saddles and follow, clinging to the animals' tails for support."

It was done, and soon half the command was dismounted.

Suddenly a man fell from the saddle.

He could not be aroused.

"Come on, or all will go the same way," sternly commanded the guide.

A few moments more and another man fell by the way.

"Come on!"

The men did not need the order.

They were indifferent.

Then a cabin came in sight.

The guide hailed and several men appeared in the door.

"Go back a quarter of a mile and bring in two men!

"Humanity demands it!" commanded the guide.

And on he led for ten, twenty minutes more, when the men came up to the door of "The Golden Arms," the tavern of the settlement.

Eager and willing hands came to their aid, and the leader, stronger than his men, turned to the unerring guide.

But Buffalo Bill was gone. He had ridden away in the storm, some one said.

CHAPTER XIV.

FOR OTHERS' SAKE.

Having guided the men to life along the trail of death, Buffalo Bill remained for no thanks, but left them to the care of others, knowing that everything would be done for them.

Warmly clad as he was, he was himself chilled to

the bone by the long night ride, and rode quickly to the house of Sule Ross, the keeper of the principal store of Yellow Dust City.

As the blizzard had driven every one to their homes, the store was closed, and Sule Ross answered the hail of the scout, and with his partner quickly did all in his power to warm and refresh him after his desperate ride.

"Why, Cody, did you not know better than to start from your camp in the face of such a storm?" asked Sule Ross, as the scout sat at the table before a blazing fire drinking a bowl of hot coffee.

"When it was simply a camp without shelter, and with no food and little wood, blankets scarce, and death certain if I remained, what else could I do, Sule?"

"You are right; but you are weather wise, and I am surprised that you were caught thus."

"I was off on a scout."

"But I want supplies, Sule; some extra blankets, a small tent, and a fine pack horse, for I must be off after dinner."

"Are you a fool, Bill Cody?"

"I have never been accused of being one, whatever else I may be guilty of."

"Do you mean that you are going to again face this blizzard?"

"I must."

"The urgency must be great."

"It is."

"Why, you will not get a mile before you are lost."

"Pardon me, but the trail to Fort Rescue, for I go that way, is down the valley for many miles, along the bank of the stream, and I can camp to-night in Cave Canyon, and be that far on my way when to-morrow comes."

"Then I have a canyon trail for many miles, and I can cross the plains with my compass, and there will only be snowdrifts there, which I can avoid."

"I can reach the fort in two days' travel after to-day."

"What is the demand, Bill, for you to risk your life?"

"To save others."

"Ah! Then there are others snowed in that you are going to return for?"

"From the fort, yes."

"I am going to the fort, you know, with all haste, to prevent searching parties being sent out after me."

"Sh!—I will answer nothing else, now.

"There comes your partner, so have him get my supplies together for me."

"I will," and the order was given for the best horse that Sule Ross had to go as a pack animal, and a small "A" tent, with a couple of buffalo and bear robes, extra blankets, and a good supply of provisions was soon gotten together for the daring man to start upon his terrible journey.

But Buffalo Bill argued to himself that if he did not take the risk and waited in Yellow Dust City until the storm was over, he would not be able to reach the fort in time, and then get to the crippled crew of outlaws who were depending upon him before another storm would be upon them, and then their fate was sealed.

By taking the risk he could perhaps reach the fort by the end of the storm, which generally blew itself out in three days.

His own danger and suffering he did not take into consideration where the lives of others, though outlaws, hung in the balance.

Their maimed limbs, haggard faces, and trust in him appealed to his manhood, his heart, and his nerve. He would do or die for them.

More could not be asked or expected.

After a hearty dinner with Sule Ross, just four hours after his arrival in Yellow Dust City, Buffalo Bill mounted his horse, which seemed as good as ever, took the pack animal in lead, and rode out of the cabin stable into the fierce blizzard.

"God bless you, Bill," rang in his ears from Sule Ross, as he faced the icy wind and driving snow.

Muffled up head, hands, body and feet, he did not feel the chill winds, and his horses were blanketed also for protection.

Past the Golden Arms he went, and men standing at the windows asked:

"What fool is that?"

But no one knew, though a miner replied:

"It's a grizzly bear on horseback, pard, taking a look at Yellow Dust City in weather that he likes!"

This caused a laugh all around, until one man called out:

"It is Buffalo Bill, by heaven!"

"That man saved our lives, and now he is going to his death, for that trail leads to the fort."

"I will stop him!"

But as he opened the door the savage wind fairly dashed him back, and there was such a howl from all

present that he was glad to give up his good intentions and rush to the fire and warm.

And, as he glanced out from his mufflers when riding by the Golden Arms, Buffalo Bill muttered:

"They are all right, now; but there would have been twenty-seven dead men when this day broke had I not found them.

"Yes, there were twenty-seven.

"Just the number that were in the band that met those outlaws."

CHAPTER XV.

A DESPERATE RIDE.

Buffalo Bill found that his horse knew what was expected of him.

He had been on that trail before several times, and he bent his head low and pushed ahead at a slow but steady pace.

The pack horse came behind, giving no trouble by pulling back on his lead line, and apparently willing to go where man dare venture.

The last miners' cabin was left behind, and no longer did a cheery fire shine forth to render the scout's position more uncomfortable by comparison with the warmth within.

The wind was blowing too fiercely for the snow to lie, and the drifts were avoided, the trail down the river reached and then followed.

All was tempest now, and darkness overhead and about the lone wayfarer. He dared not stop, for the Cave Canyon was to be reached by night, for there shelter would be found.

Knowing that his horses could get little if any grass, the scout had brought along a bushel of corn for them, so they would be able to keep up their strength and animal warmth.

It was terrible traveling at times, for here and there snowdrifts had to be gone through, and several times the animals went down in the depths.

But up again and on was Buffalo Bill's will, and they pushed along, undaunted by anything.

As night drew near, the clouds appeared to trail lower and look blacker, and the snow came down like a hurricane; yet on the noble steeds went, guided by the master hand.

Darker and darker grew the clouds, but the Cave Canyon was not far off, and Buffalo Bill urged his horses to swifter pace.

Soon the cliffs loomed up, the canyon was reached, and on the lee side Buffalo Bill found one of the large caverns that had given it its name.

He rode right in, and the horses gave a snort of delight to be out of the cold.

There was a growth of cedars at the base of the cliff, and so fallen wood was plentiful, and Buffalo Bill quickly gathered a good supply and carried it into the cavern, where he built a fire.

The cavern was, strictly speaking, only a crevice in the rocks, but it was arched over, large enough for a score of horses, and through a crevice in the rear end the smoke found quick exit, the fire drawing with the roar of a massive chimney.

Of course, there was no use to pitch the tent with such shelter, and the scout unsaddled his horses, fed them, spread his blankets, and then began to prepare his own supper.

Without the winds howled appallingly, but, though the cavern was draughty, it was free from snow, and man and horse could be comfortable.

Without it would have been death to all.

But Buffalo Bill congratulated himself that he had such good shelter, had come twenty miles upon his way, and, without the guide marks he knew well, he could not be lost.

If the storm grew worse, as it appeared to be doing, he would push on to another place, where he knew he would find fairly good shelter for his horses and himself, plenty of wood, and, if only a dozen miles further on, it would be that much to his credit.

With this thought, he warmed himself well, saw that the horses were well blanketed, and, lying down in his bed, was soon fast asleep, for he had had a very trying experience in the past twenty-four hours.

Dawn broke and found the storm still raging, though the snow had turned to sleet.

A good feed for the horses, a roaring fire, excellent breakfast, and the desperate ride was resumed.

Once out of the Cave Canyon, and Buffalo Bill realized how desperate, indeed, his undertaking was; still, there was nothing for it but to stagger on, and staggering it was for the horses over the icy ground.

The exercise kept them warmed up, however, and Buffalo Bill was too well bundled up to be very cold.

Slow work it was, however, and it was noon when the shelter that the scout had in mind was reached.

It was a narrow canyon, with breaks in it here and there, but with wood plentiful.

He knew that he dared not venture on, for he could not cross the plain ahead before night, so he turned into the canyon to camp for the rest of the day and until the following morning.

The wind swept through the narrow canyon with terrible force, but when one of the breaks was reached shelter from its fury was found.

Buffalo Bill found one of these, hardly larger than a room, and with a growth of pines in it.

The snow had blocked the entrance, but had not gone further, and what little drifted in did not disturb him.

He forced his horses through the drift into the protection of the pines, soon had a blazing fire, and pitched his tent facing it, and where it would be a break for the two animals, both of whom seemed glad to reach such a snug shelter from the pelting blizzard.

Thus the afternoon passed, and blanketed and standing in pine straw knee deep, the horses were certainly secured from freezing and ate their supper with relish.

Buffalo Bill's appetite had not deserted him, and after a smoke he replenished his fire and turned in his little tent, content that matters were not worse.

He had had plenty of rest in the afternoon, so he was up before dawn, had breakfast, and the moment the gray of day appeared he mounted and once more faced the fearful blasts, for the blizzard had not yet blown itself out.

CHAPTER XVI.

FIGHTING FOR LIFE.

It was a hard fight to reach the plain, through the snowdrifts, but it was done in safety, and there, as he had anticipated, Buffalo Bill saw that traveling would be easy for the horses.

The snow had been blown into great drifts, and, though avoiding these would make the distance many miles further, he could push on at a good pace and not hurt his horses.

It was thirty long miles across the plain, with not a bush for shelter, no water or wood, so to be caught there would mean death.

The wind swept it with hurricane force, but fortunately it was at the scout's back.

With a few moments to rest the scout rode upon the plain, having taken his bearings by the compass he now carried in his gloved hand.

On, on he went, going as surely as the pilot guides his ship over the trackless waves, and above him, about

him, everywhere howled the blizzard, still keeping up with relentless force.

The plain was crossed and the hills beyond were reached.

The fort yet lay forty miles away, and so another night must be passed out in the elements.

But Buffalo Bill had already decided to push on to an old cabin, once a stockade fort, and there find shelter.

He knew that it was reach that or perish, for nowhere else was there shelter, and the windings about among the snowdrifts on the plain had taken him hours longer than he expected.

Fortunately his way lay under the lee of a bluff, and the eddying wind had cleared a space he could readily follow.

His horses were put into a gallop.

He could not spare them then.

There was no time for rest or food, life was at stake, and so on they went at a pace that was hard but imperative.

Night fell, and the cabin was yet several miles away.

But on, on, through the knee-deep snow and massive drifts the brave horses struggled until their strength was almost gone.

Buffalo Bill's horse knew that cabin, his instinct told him what his master was striving for, and he needed no urging.

But the led horse now hung back hard upon the lead line.

This would never do, and the scout dismounted, slipped the pack to his horse, mounted the other animal, and had to drive rowels deep to urge him on.

The good animal strove hard, staggered badly, and, after a couple of miles, went down.

But right ahead was the old stockade cabin.

Rushing to it, Buffalo Bill dashed wide open the half-open door, and with yelps and snarls of fright and anger out dashed a pack of wolves that had taken refuge there.

With benumbed hands matches were found and lighted, and, as he had remembered, there was wood in plenty piled up upon each side of the large fireplace.

To build a fire, half frozen as he was, was no easy task, but it was done, and then Buffalo Bill led his own horse into the cabin, and he knew that he was just in time to have saved himself also.

Out he dashed to see if he could save the other horse, but the yelping pack of snarling wolves were al-

ready upon the dying beast, and the scout had to use his revolvers quickly to drive them off.

Taking off his saddle and bridle with all haste, he ran back to the cabin, closed the door, stripped the pack from his horse, and, filling his coffee pot with snow, put it on to boil, for he realized how badly he needed a warm drink.

There was a small stream right at the rear of the stockade, he knew, but he was too cold to go to it, even had it not been frozen, so snow served his purpose for water and he soon had a good cup of coffee.

Instantly he felt the good effects, for the blood began to warm in his veins, and he said to his horse:

"I am sorry, old fellow, that you are not a coffee drinker, for it would do you a world of good."

The fire was now sending a genial heat through the room, and Buffalo Bill threw open the door that led into another room and led his horse in there, well knowing that the artificial warmth was not good for him.

He was glad to find a lot of hay there, and with bunches of it gave the horse a hard rubbing down that warmed him thoroughly.

Then he put a blanket over him, and, hatchet in hand, led him out to the stream, where a hole was cut in the ice.

Eagerly the horse drank, and, taken back to shelter, he was given a good feed of corn, and a bedding of hay was spread for him on the dirt floor.

This humane duty done, the scout prepared his own supper, and was soon after wrapped in slumber and blankets before the blazing fire.

He had upon his mind the crippled crew in the mountains, and how they must suffer under this prolonged and terrific blizzard!

"I must reach the fort with all speed if I expect to find one of them alive.

"It will be a hard drive, but I will push on before dawn," was his decision as he sank into a deep sleep.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LAST STRUGGLE.

A sleep of half a dozen hours made a new man of Buffalo Bill, and he arose with a determination to battle again against the elements for the lives of others.

He gave his horse the last feed of corn, for he knew there was no retreat anywhere between the cabin and the fort, and he must reach the latter or go under.

The storm still continued with unabated fury, the sleet driving hard against the cabin.

A good breakfast, with plenty of hot coffee, and he was ready for the struggle with the elements.

His horse was blanketed, but the tent, pack saddle and all extra weight were swung up in the cabin to be sent after from the fort, for he wished to save the strength of his horse for the final fight for life.

When all was ready, he led his horse into the room, and, muffled up as before, threw open the door and mounted.

The storm rushed into the cabin with a savage howl, and the darkness without was intense.

Buffalo Bill knew that the trail was not far away, and it ran along a ridge for miles. By the time he reached the end of the ridge it would be dawn, and then he could see his way.

The horse bent low to the blast, and the start was made. In wild eddies the sleet whirled about them, and here and there it was a flounder through the snow-drifts.

Muffled to his eyes, the scout was not cold, and the exercise kept the blood circulating in the horse.

The cold was bitter in its intensity, and the wind was yet blowing a gale, sending the sleet in stinging showers upon man and beast.

Buffalo Bill knew that nearly a week had gone since he left the maimed outlaws in the mountains depending upon him alone to save their lives.

The time was flying fast, and half of his desperate rescue trail was drawing to an end.

So on he went, and at last the gray dawn came to show him that he was right.

He had not lost the trail, for the dark line he had kept close upon his right was the ridge.

But there it ended, and another plain was to be crossed.

A dozen miles to ride with no shelter from the bitter wind, then a pass through a range into a valley, and the fort would loom up before him.

"Come, old fellow, get yourself together close, or this wind will cut your legs from under you.

"One minute until I get my bears," and once more he appealed to his compass.

"All right; go ahead.

"It is do or die now, old pard!"

The horse seemed to know the fact as well as did the rider, and started on with quick tread.

Out into the plain, and five minutes lost the ridge,

and there was no more sign of anything than at sea to guide them, only the driving sleet, and all about them mist.

The compass was true, and horse and man, well experienced, kept on with unerring step.

Hours passed, and then suddenly there arose ahead of them a high, dark mass.

It was the range! Never given to expressing his feelings extravagantly, Buffalo Bill could not now resist one long, loud yell of triumph.

It was promptly answered by a glad neigh from his faithful horse.

"Ah, old fellow, you see the range, too, and know that we are saved.

"Yes, there is the canyon opening before us, and three miles more and we reach the fort. Come, old horse, come!"

On they went, the noble animal seeming to have gotten new vigor by the words of his master.

Through the pass in the range, where they were protected from the biting winds, then out into the valley, and on the broad trail for the fort.

A stream led through the valley, and the stockade walls of the fort crossed it.

Upon the right bank, in a clump of timber and crowning the hill, was the fort, a strongly built structure, commanding the valley for miles around.

It was a pleasant spot, was Fort Rescue, commanded by a dashing, daring colonel of cavalry, a bold Indian fighter, and under his command were half a thousand soldiers.

Suddenly through the driving storm the sentinel at the main entrance beheld a dark object approaching, and, hardly believing his eyes, he strained them in his endeavor to see if he could be right.

A minute more and he sprang out of the sentry box upon the stockade wall, and his voice rang loudly as he shouted:

"Corporal of the guard!

"Throw open the main gate, for Buffalo Bill is here!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LOST COMRADE.

"My God, old pard, are you going to give up, too? See! Yonder is the fort! We are right upon it! One more brave struggle and you are saved!"

So almost shouted Buffalo Bill to his noble horse,

which had begun to stagger, and when the fort was looming up through the blinding storm not a hundred yards ahead.

But the noble beast could do no more, and, springing from the saddle, Buffalo Bill began to draw his horse along.

"Hark! They have seen us, old pard! I hear the sentinel!

"Don't give up here, for the love of God!" entreated the scout, as though he was pleading with a human soul not to take flight.

But the horse gasped terribly, stopped, all in a tremor, and, with a groan that was human in its utterance, fell at his master's feet.

Buffalo Bill's head bent low for a moment, his hand rested caressingly upon the frost-covered head, and the tribute was paid in quivering words:

"You have done your duty, noble pard—only God can do more!"

"Ho, there! Are you mad, Cody, to stand still in this cruel tempest?"

The voice brought Buffalo Bill to a realization of his danger.

It was Captain Charlie Adams, officer of the day, who, at the call of the sentinel, had dashed out of the guard quarters, thrown open the gate, and, followed by half a dozen soldiers, had run toward Buffalo Bill, where they saw him standing by the side of his horse.

"Oh, Captain Adams, I got here, but I killed my poor horse. Strip him, men, for I am about used up; and, captain, I beg you to have him brought into the fort, for no coyote shall ever touch that noble brute."

"It shall be done, Cody. Sergeant, you see to it.

"Now, Cody, come with me, for you need care immediately."

"I believe I do, sir."

"How in Heaven's name did you get here?" and the captain seized Buffalo Bill's arm and dragged him along into the fort, and then straight toward the hospital.

"That dead pard of mine brought me, sir."

"But where from?"

"The Death Valley Mountains, by way of Yellow Dust City, sir."

"Why did you not stop at Yellow Dust?"

"I had to come on, for there are lives to save, Captain Adams.

"See! The clouds are breaking, the storm is over, and I will yet save them!" cried Buffalo Bill, excitedly.

"The first thing is to save you," muttered Captain Adams, and he fairly dragged Buffalo Bill into the quarters of Dr. Frank Powell, the chief surgeon of the post, while all over the garrison were heard cheers for the return of Buffalo Bill, for the news had spread like wildfire, and cabin doors were opened to give vent to shouts of joy, but quickly closed again when the storm made the occupants feel the bitter cold.

"They are cheering you, Cody, for we all gave you up as dead," said Captain Adams, as a tall form opened the door and said:

"It is true, then?"

"Thank God, Bill, I see you alive again, for this time I nearly gave you up as dead."

It was Surgeon Frank Powell, and, without waiting to grasp the scout's hand, he began to drag off of him the wraps he wore, at the same time calling to a hospital steward to prepare him a hot drink of liquor and have a cot ready at once.

"No, no! I'll take the hot drink, but not the cot, doctor. I've got work to do, another trail to start over, and no time to lose."

Both Captain Adams and Surgeon Powell looked at the scout as though they believed his mind was wandering.

"Well, Powell, I will leave Cody to you," and Captain Adams returned to his duties as officer of the day, and sent an orderly to report to Colonel Lennox that Buffalo Bill, chief of scouts, had returned to the fort in a half-frozen condition, his horse dying almost at the gate, and that the scout had been taken to the quarters of Surgeon Powell.

In the meanwhile Buffalo Bill had been made comfortable in an easy-chair, had taken the hot drink, and when Surgeon Powell insisted upon putting him to bed said, very decidedly:

"I am all right, and no worse than I was last night in the old deserted stockade on the Yellow Dust trail.

"I will be as good as new as soon as I have had dinner, and in the meanwhile I wish to talk to you, Frank, for I have pledged myself to save human lives now depending upon me, and I have answered for it that you go with me to do so."

Without a moment's hesitation, Frank Powell said, decidedly:

"I will go with you, Bill."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SCOUT'S PROMISE.

Surgeon Frank Powell did not take long to see that Buffalo Bill knew what he was talking about, that his mind was not wandering.

They had been devoted friends for years, had been on many a terrible trail together, had faced many a deadly danger side by side.

Each owed to the other the debt of a life.

Buffalo Bill had left the fort some weeks before on a lone scout, and a dangerous one.

Word had come that a band of desperadoes, unearthed in their crimes, had been spared the rope and driven out of Yellow Dust City, under penalty of death if they sought any other mining camp or settlement within that territory.

It was feared that the band of outlaws would strike some of the settlements, raid them, and then make their escape, and Buffalo Bill had been ordered on the duty of finding the band, warning them of the result if any such act was perpetrated, and to keep watch upon them until they were well out of the country.

As he was known to have gone up into the mountains, near the Indian country, and did not return, great anxiety was felt for his safety from the colonel down.

When the first severe storm of winter came and he did not appear soon after, the gravest fears were felt for him, and Surgeon Powell had volunteered to take the company of scouts and go in search of him.

This the colonel consented to, and the start was to have been made the following morning, when the blizzard came, and that, of course, put their going out of the question.

Surgeon Powell had said he would face the storm, but this Colonel Lennox would not allow, saying that it would result in many deaths instead of one.

Then in the storm Buffalo Bill appeared, and how he had gotten to the fort the oldest frontiersman there could not imagine.

When Buffalo Bill said what he did to Surgeon Powell, the latter saw that he was in earnest.

He knew his pard too well to feel that he had been such a fool as to come to the fort in such a blizzard merely to get there.

He saw that there was a reason, and a good one, and lives depending upon him had made him take the desperate chances of getting there.

"In God's name, how did you do it, Bill?"

"I don't know.

"I do not see how I could have done it, since it was accomplished, but I am here."

"Thank Heaven, you are."

"I killed a horse last night, or, rather, the blizzard did, and a splendid beast he was.

"I took refuge in the old stockade cabin, and the horse died in sight of it.

"I came from Yellow Dust, and the first night made the Cave Canyon, the next day only a dozen miles, then the stockade cabin, and to-day the fort.

"My noble horse, Giant, died in sight of the fort, poor fellow, and I wish to bury him in the soldiers' graveyard, for he deserves it, as he saved many lives, my own next, and will be instrumental in saving more.

"I tell you, Frank, that I left a band of helpless men, crippled all of them, up in the mountains beyond Death Valley, and they have no food save deer meat and the little I could leave them, and it is about gone now.

"They are sheltered as well as could be expected, have plenty of wood, and yet a few days more will starve and freeze them out."

"Miners, of course?"

"Frank, let us say so, but to you I will tell the truth."

"Ah!"

"They are the band of outlaws on whose trail I was sent."

"No!"

"It is the truth."

"Then you have more humanity in you, Bill Cody, than half the preachers who preach it, but don't practice it."

"I have a sense of duty."

"Yes, and you have gone beyond it all in aiding a band of men who ought to be hanged."

"Perhaps, but I have given my word that you will return with me to their rescue."

"If you have given your word, I will go, but not to help them alone."

"Oh, yes, you will; for the humane lies as deep in your breast as in that of any man alive.

"I tell you that these men, outlaws we will call them, are on the verge of death, and a frightful, despairing death—"

"I will go, Bill."

"I knew that.

"But these men were hunted by a band of inhuman fiends, who, in hounding them for what they had done, showed themselves even worse than they, for, by treachery, they got them into their power, and then, Surgeon Frank Powell, you will scarcely believe what I tell you, but the devils cut off a hand or a foot of each one of the unfortunate wretches!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE TALE OF WOE.

Surgeon Frank Powell sprang to his feet as though Buffalo Bill had struck him. His face paled with indignation at what he heard, and he walked twice across the room before he spoke.

"Buffalo Bill, few men could tell me what you have, and I not say that they lied.

"I believe you, and yet to do so lowers mankind to a level with the brute creation. Who were they?"

"They felt so ashamed of their dastard cruelty that they masked their faces and the outlaws did not know one of them."

"They were far worse than the outlaws."

"Far."

"Why did you come around by Yellow Dust?"

"I did not intend to do so, but I came upon a camp of lost miners, and they were in very little better condition than the outlaws, save for the latter being crippled."

"They were lost?"

"Completely, and I knew that another blizzard was coming.

"It has come, and you know what it has been, Frank, but if you want more information I can give you pointers on it."

"I am sure of that, Bill."

"Well, I had but little food, but I shared it, then set the band moving, and struck out for Yellow Dust, the nearest point, that night."

"And made it?"

"Early the next morning, and in a blinding storm.

"We lost two men and a number of horses, and yet made it."

"You were fortunate."

Buffalo Bill then went on to tell of his short stop with Sule Ross, the storekeeper of Yellow Dust City, and his starting upon his desperate ride through the blizzard.

Dr. Powell listened with rapt attention to all, and then asked:

"But, Bill, to return to those poor outlaws, could they not give the slightest clew as to who the men were that treated them thus, for punishment most dire should be visited upon such wretches."

"No, they could not, or, rather, did not; but I can," was Buffalo Bill's response to the surprise of Surgeon Powell.

"You know who the perpetrators of that fiendish crime are, Bill?" asked Dr. Powell.

"I know enough to be a clew to track them."

"Good!"

"But it must be a secret, Frank, as is the one about the outlaws, whom we go to rescue."

"Certainly."

"There were twenty-seven men, the outlaws said, in the band that corraled them."

"Yes."

"There were twenty-seven men in the band I found lost and guided to Yellow Dust City."

"I see."

"From certain remarks made by the outlaws, I learned enough to spot some of the men among the lost miners.

"They were masked when they did their deed, but they were not masked when I found them.

"They had no guide, and got lost in the second storm, and they would have been eternally lost in this last one if I had not found them, for they were out of provisions, as I told you.

"I did not to them refer to the outlaws in any way, but I took them to Yellow Dust and they are safe there when wanted, for they do not suspect they are under suspicion."

"That is well.

"But now to our trip, Bill."

"Yes, and we must get off to-day."

"So soon?"

"Yes."

"The storm is over, as you see, and we can go as far as the stockade cabin to-night, and then branch off in the morning, for it is not a mile out of our way."

"You know best, Bill."

"We can be up and ready to start with dawn, and we go through a canyon that I do not believe will be much blocked with snow, and can make a night camp in the foothills, fully thirty miles from the stockade cabin, and the next day I hope to get to the camp.

"The truth is, Frank, we must get there with all speed, let our horses suffer as they may."

"And what force will you take?"

"No soldiers?"

"None."

"Only Surgeon Frank Powell."

"Not one of your scouts?"

"Not one."

"You will see the colonel?"

"Yes, and get from him half a dozen of the best government mules for pack animals, for they stand the cold well and are good snow breakers, while they live on less than a horse."

"They do, but you will need some grain for them."

"Yes, and our horses.

"I will have one to carry grain alone.

"But I will see the colonel now, as I will have time before dinner, and wish to start the work of preparation."

"It is best.

"But are you all right yourself?"

"Perfectly sound and good as new again," was the answer, and, muffling himself up well, Buffalo Bill went to headquarters.

"I welcome you as from the grave, Cody, for we had

given you up for lost; but, like a cat, you have nine lives," said Colonel Lennox.

"I may take chances, colonel, but I generally see my way clear before doing so, sir.

"But I have to report that the outlaw band went over into Death Valley."

"Ah! Then that settles them."

"But I found a band of freezing, starving men up in the mountains, sir, and that is why I risked what I did to get to the fort."

"They are doomed then."

"No, sir, I left them as well off as possible, and Surgeon Powell says that he will, with your permission, return with me with supplies, for they cannot be moved."

"It is madness."

"Oh, no, sir, I got through in the storm, and we can go the trail now."

"I will not let a force go, for it would mean death, and you should not risk your scouts' lives."

"No one goes with me, save Surgeon Powell, and we take all risks for humanity's sake."

The colonel remained firm in his refusal for a while, but at last yielded when Surgeon Powell came in and said that the ride could be made and he was anxious to go.

This settled, the colonel gave orders to the commissary, quartermaster and hospital steward to supply all things needed by the two bold adventurers, and this was done.

Having obtained permission from Colonel Lennox to bury his horse in the graveyard of the fort, Buffalo Bill ordered his scouts to see that it was done, and then went to his dinner.

It was just one o'clock when the two daring men, the surgeon and the scout, mounted their best horses, all ready for their dangerous undertaking.

They had in line seven large, strong mules, carrying pack saddles, well filled with all that the unfortunate men in the mountains would need.

For various reasons best known to himself, Buffalo Bill had kept secret from Colonel Lennox even that those he was going to rescue were the remnant of the outlawed band, and the men in the fort only knew that the chief of scouts had dared the terrors of the storm to go back to the rescue of the half-dying men he had found in the mountains.

Loud were the cheers that greeted the two men as they rode out of the fort.

The storm had broken, the sun had come out, and, though bitterly cold, it was not what Buffalo Bill had to face five hours before.

The trail of his horse was visible, and this was taken and followed, the pace being one that would bring them to the stockade cabin before night.

It was a hard ride, but the cabin was reached, the fire still burned, and the surgeon scout and Buffalo Bill

were at least sure of good quarters for themselves and their animals for that night.

A fine deer was shot near the cabin, so venison steak was had for supper, and some choice morsels cut to carry along.

The wolves howled outside, angry at being driven from their shelter, but that did not disturb the sleep of the two comrades.

Up before dawn, the horses were fed, breakfast was gotten, and with the first glimmer of light they were in their saddles and on their hard trail.

And a hard trail it was, in places almost impassable, where the snow and ice blocked their way.

A halt was made for a good rest at noon, then once more onward, for they had a destination to reach by night, if they expected to shelter themselves and their horses from the bitter cold.

It was reached while the daylight yet remained, a thicket of pines up a canyon.

The snow had not driven in among the pines, so the pine straw was plentiful for the animals and their own bed.

Boughs were cut as a break to the wind for man and beast, a roaring fire was built, and what comfort could be gotten out of a hot supper was had.

But the cold was intense, and both men realized that away from the shelter thicket both their horses and themselves would suffer terribly.

Up again at dawn and once more on their way, Buffalo Bill guiding unerringly, though many obstacles turned them out of their way.

No camping at noon, for the scout knew that a few miles more would bring them to the outlaws' camp, and there certainly was rest and shelter, whatever they might find there.

That Buffalo Bill had his misgivings of finding them alive, Surgeon Powell plainly saw.

On, on, they went, the horses very tired now with the hard fight, until at last Buffalo Bill called out:

"Frank, there is the camp!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DESPAIRING BAND.

Burt Boyd and his comrades saw Buffalo Bill leave them as men might bid farewell to a dying friend.

He had found them in their despair and suffering, and had indeed proved a good Samaritan.

They had been in that condition of suffering and mental anguish when every hope had faded from them.

They were helpless, hopeless and almost indifferent to the fate that faced them, so cruel and relentless had their own kind shown themselves to be to them.

But Buffalo Bill had come among them like a ray of sunshine. His cheery manner had done much for them.

Then his hot coffee, food, and the way he had built them a shelter had been a new lease on life to them.

It was true that they had to huddle together like wild beasts to keep from freezing, and yet it saved them.

The scout Samaritan had dressed their wounds, had buried their dead comrades, had made their shelter secure from the penetrating winds.

He had cut a hole in the ice which they could keep open and thus get water.

More, he had made rude but serviceable crutches for the man who had lost a leg.

Piling wood up he had cut in plenty, he had then given them nearly all the provisions he had, left them with half his blankets, and then told them he would save them.

With this pledge ringing in their ears, he had left them.

Their faces grew dark with dread as they saw him go forth in the early morn.

As best they could, later they had their scant breakfast, for they well knew that they must prepare against delays.

A half tincup of coffee, a cracker, slice of bacon, and a piece of venison was all, in limited quantity.

Those who were able did what they could to still strengthen their shelter and make it more snug.

They got in a supply of pine straw, and in every way they could prepared for the worst.

Their wounded limbs told them that the worst was coming.

They knew that a bitter storm was brewing.

Forgetful of their own misery, they thought of Buffalo Bill.

The day wore away, night came, and they were not as uncomfortable as they had feared.

The next day the skies looked threatening. The little more they could do was done to still make their retreat more secure.

They decided to eat but two meals a day, morning and evening, for their supplies looked scant, indeed. Still they were improving, save two of them, whose maimed limbs gave them pain and anxiety.

Their shelter, the food they had, their comparative comfort, and the inspiration of hope made them feel better.

With the night came the storm, which soon became a blizzard infernal. It shook their shanty, yet the snow stopped up every crack and made it warmer within.

It was an awful night, and they slept but little. They did not dare make a blazing fire for fear of being burned out.

Day came and still the blizzard raged.

Another night of suffering and dread!

Another day of anguish of mind!

"Buffalo Bill is dead, pards, and we are doomed,"

opined Walt Webster, one of the men most hopeful before.

"Do not talk that way, Webster, for it simply drives hope away. I, for one, have hope in Buffalo Bill," responded Burt Boyd.

"As I have; but do you think mortal man can be out in this blizzard and live, Captain Boyd?"

"Buffalo Bill may have reached the fort, or, seeing the blizzard was going to catch him, have gone to Yellow Dust and secured help."

"Help in Yellow Dust City for us? Why, they would come out and shoot us as we are," another man said, bitterly.

"Not if Buffalo Bill was along."

"See here, captain, you have more faith in what that man can do than falls to human beings to be able to accomplish."

"I have known him for years, and I know that he has done what the bravest men shrink from."

"No, pards, if Buffalo Bill lives, he will keep his pledges and come back to us," confidently asserted Burt Boyd.

"If he lives," disconsolately echoed several voices.

Another night, another day, and the storm still continued.

There was no disguising now that one of their comrades was raving in the delirium of a high fever. His pleading to be taken home touched every heart. But nothing could be done for him.

The blizzard at last came to an end, but the sunshine gave them little hope.

Another day and night, and yet another.

Their supplies were gone, and despair rested upon every face. Even Boyd looked hopeless, dreading night to come on.

"Ho, pards, I am back again!"

It was Buffalo Bill's voice without!

He had kept his pledge to the outlawed band!

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DYING OUTLAW'S PRAYER.

Words could never express what those despairing men felt in that snowbound shanty when they heard the voice of the scout outside, telling them that he had returned, that he had kept his word in the face of obstacles they had believed impossible.

They were seated in sullen silence, looking into the fire, each man busy with his own thoughts.

They were hungry and cold, for their blood was thinned by their wounds, suffering and scant provisions.

The fire burned brightly, yet did not warm the blood in their chilled veins.

The ravings of their comrade in delirium they hardly heard.

They had grown used to that.

Buffalo Bill and Frank Powell had ridden close up to the shanty unheard.

The afternoon was half gone, and the night only several hours away.

But the two brave men had made the desperate ride, had reached the goal.

Their horses were well worn, and glad of the shelter they had reached.

Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell had at first believed all were dead.

Then the ravings of the fevered sufferer were heard, and the scout spoke:

They heard his voice within. The boughs and blanket that formed the entrance were pushed aside and the white face of Burt Boyd peered out.

He could scarcely believe his ears; he must have proof with his eyes that Buffalo Bill was there!

"Ho, pard, I am back again, and Surgeon Frank Powell is with me, while we have supplies in abundance.

"How fares it with you all?"

"A moment ago we were on the verge of death. Now we are saved, saved, and once more by you, Buffalo Bill!

"Come, men, do you hear me talking to Buffalo Bill? It is no dream, no dream, no, but the truth."

Dismounting from their horses, Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell had followed Burt Boyd into the shanty.

The picture was a strange one.

The men were crouched about a dead body, one of their number who had died that day.

It was too sad a scene for the living, Buffalo Bill knew, and he said, cheerily:

"He is out of all suffering, comrades; he has solved the mystery of life and death; so he needs not our sympathy.

"You are the ones to need aid, and Surgeon Powell is here with me, so cheer up, all of you."

The men gave a faint cheer, but obeyed the scout and went out into the sunshine.

"Here, get some coffee made first, for I will build a fire outside, and then we will soon have things in shape in your cabin.

"You can open the packs and help us, for there is much to be done before night, but Surgeon Powell and I will do the hard work."

The fire outside was soon made, the coffee pot was put on, the horses and mules were unsaddled, and the packs opened.

The old straw in the shanty was thrown out, all within was put in good order, and bear and buffalo robes, blankets and canvas curtains around the walls made the cabin as comfortable as could be desired.

The shanty for the horses and mules was then strengthened, improved, and they were put in it and fed well after their hard journey.

Next the burial of the one who had died followed, and all stood uncovered about the grave while the body was consigned to its last home.

"Now, pards, night is upon us, and we'll have a supper such as you have not had for many a long day, and Surgeon Powell will look to your wounds later so that you will have a good night's rest.

"Remember, we have plenty of supplies, so let nothing disturb your minds, and here you can winter, and be all right when the spring comes, save that you have each one lost a limb," said Buffalo Bill, cheerfully.

The sufferings of the Blue Belts were forgotten in the broad glare of the blazing fire of logs, with a good supper, warm clothing, plenty of blankets, and a well-filled larder.

The presence of Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell was like a glass of wine to them, and they bore their sufferings now most cheerfully.

The Surgeon Scout, with Buffalo Bill as his assistant, set to work to look at the stumps of the severed limbs.

Of course, with the cold and enforced neglect, the wounds were inflamed and in bad condition.

One poor fellow was told that he must have another amputation—that his arm must be cut off further up—to save his life.

He submitted without a word, took the chloroform the surgeon gave him, and the amputation was quickly and skillfully done.

With all that was necessary to dress the wounds, Surgeon Powell soon had each man comfortable, and expressed his surprise that they were not in a worse condition.

The rest of the story of Buffalo Bill's rescue of the outcasts of Yellow Dust City and his fight for life with the blizzard is soon told. The scout had accomplished what he set out to do. He had won in his fight against the great white storm king.

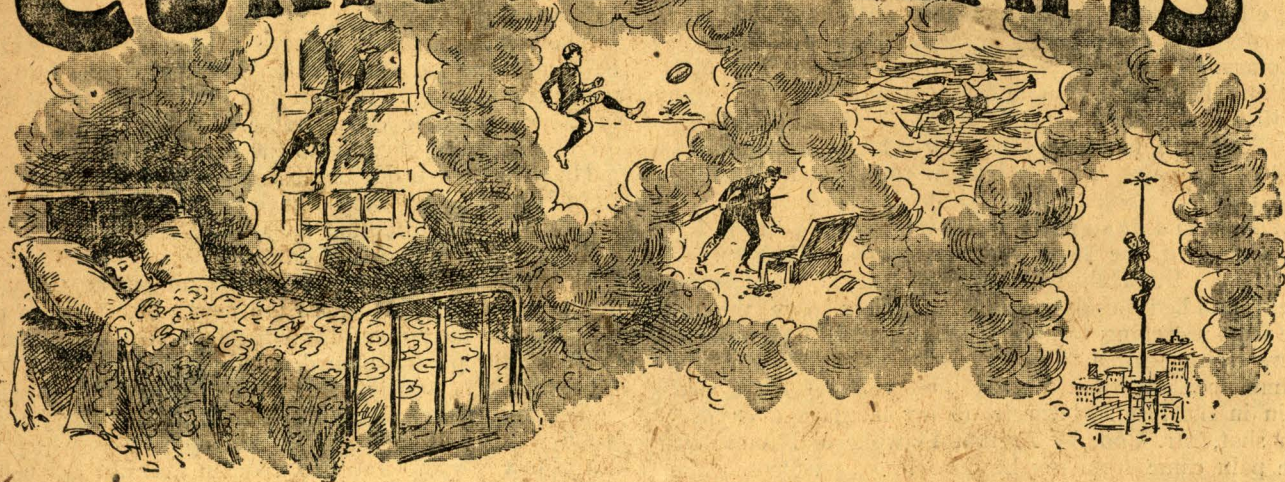
The outcasts, whose treatment by their fellowmen had been so terrible—at least the seven of them who remained alive—were saved.

With Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell to assist them, with plenty of firing, clothes and provisions on hand, they were able to weather any storms that might come, and to remain in safety at their hiding place in the Valley of Death until they were sufficiently recovered from their wounds to travel again.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 90, will contain "Buffalo Bill's Crippled Crew; or, Sunflower Sam of Shasta." Buffalo Bill vowed to avenge the poor outcasts of Yellow Dust City. He started out on a hunt for the men who had injured them so terribly. He had several clews. He had a lot to contend with and some of the most exciting times of his career.

CURIOUS DREAMS



This contest has certainly caught on.
If you are not in it, you must be.
Send us your dream.
Think how proud you will be if you win one of
the splendid prizes.
For list of prizes see page 31.

A Horrible Dream.

(By Emil Morgan, New York City.)

One night in September I dreamed that I was going to Europe with my father, and we had been on the water two days. On that same night, as I was leaning on the rail, thinking what a nice time I was going to have, some one gave me a push, and I went overboard.

When I reached the water I saw, to my dismay, a large shark which was about to seize me. I struggled hard to get away from it, but all in vain, and before I knew it he had swallowed me up. Just then I awoke with a start, but, finding that I was safely lodged in bed instead of a shark's stomach, I felt very grateful indeed.

Cured of Smoking by a Dream.

(By Bertrand Lanning, Odell, Ohio.)

About a year ago I commenced to smoke. The habit kept growing on me till I smoked nearly all the time and I was very nervous. One night after going to bed I fell asleep and dreamed that I died. I thought I went up to the golden gates of heaven and knocked for admittance. Old St. Peter came to the gate and asked me what I wanted there. I told him that I had died and I wanted to go to heaven. He asked me what my name was, and I told him.

Then I thought he got down a big book that was full of names, and commenced to hunt for my name. Finally he told me that he couldn't find my name there, so I must be booked to go to the other place.

I told him I didn't see how that could be, for I was a church member and had always lived an honest life.

So he commenced looking again, and I was thinking of going away and then coming back and trying to get

into heaven under an assumed name, when, suddenly, he turned to me and said, "Yes, I've found your name, but it is so near blotted out with tobacco smoke that I can hardly read it. In a few days more it would have been entirely gone." I was so scared at my narrow escape that I woke up and the dream made such an impression on my mind that I haven't smoked since then.

Interest 1.

(By Roger B. Jordan, Newport, R. I.)

I pulled up the flap of Buffalo Bill's tent and shouted excitedly, for excited I was, "Wake up, Mr. Cody. Taylor Travis has escaped."

"What's that?" exclaimed Buffalo Bill, wide awake in a minute. For once this cool, level-headed scout was surprised into making an exclamation.

No wonder he was surprised, for the news I brought him was both surprising and remarkable, for only the day before Buffalo Bill and the garrison of Fort Tars had the exquisite pleasure of seeing the captain of the Cobras shot and buried—a just end for his many crimes.

"Come," said I, "and I will show you." My invitation was not necessary, for Buffalo Bill had banished sleep from his tired eyes and was already striding toward the tent opening. In the short time I had taken to tell him these few words he had his belt buckled and his weapons examined and replaced. Together we walked to the grave. There, just as I had told Buffalo Bill, was the grave of Taylor Travis, showing plainly that the grave had been disturbed. "Is it possible that man's money has cheated even death!" muttered Buffalo Bill. Casting a swift glance, he took in all the details. He saw tracks of men around and leading from the grave.

"You can come with me if you like," said Buffalo Bill. "We have not a moment to spare." Without awakening the slumbers of the tired garrison, Buffalo Bill saddled "Comrade," and motioned me to do likewise to a fleet-looking bay horse. In another minute we were riding swiftly across the prairie.

"They will make for the railroad track, flag a train and escape east. I think I know the point they will try and make." So, mile after mile, we sped swiftly. At last Buffalo Bill signaled a halt and we got down. He then muffled the hoofs of the horses. Then we remounted. Suddenly we saw dimly the forms of several men, huddled beside the track. They were the men we were searching for, and, as Buffalo Bill had surmised, were waiting for a train. As soon as they saw us they commenced shooting. At the first volley I felt a sharp pain in the head. I threw up my hands and cried, "I am shot, Mr. Cody." At that I awoke and found that the pain came from my head coming in violent contact with the table I had placed at the head of my bed to hold the lamp while I finished reading the last chapters of "Buffalo Bill's Road Agent Round Up."

A Mysterious Dream.

(By Eben A. Upton, Salem, Mass.)

A friend and I had been digging a deep hole in our yard, and had tunneled a great way under the ground. It had taken about a week to accomplish our task, until at last we were satisfied.

One day we made a fire and sent up paper balloons, and did everything that was mischievous, until it was time to go to supper and we parted. I went into the house, ate my supper and read a while; then, tired from my work, I went to bed and, after thinking for a long time, I fell fast asleep and I dreamed the following dream:

With a cry of horror, I leaped back up the steps, coming in violent contact with Frank.

"Look out, Charles!" he cried. "For gracious sake, be careful. Next thing you know you'll have us both tumbling down into that fiery furnace, which would be anything but pleasant, you must admit."

"Pleasant!" I shouted, a little provoked at Frank's coolness; pleasant! Why! 'twould be simply death, that's all! Look how the fire streams up into the dome above us! It is whirling round and round at the rate of a hundred miles an hour at the very least."

"Two hundred, more likely," replied Frank, coolly seating himself on the steps and following with his eye the ascending flames as they went shooting up into the lofty dome of the cavern. "See, there is the mouth of the well up yonder! This cavern is nothing but an enlargement of the well after all."

"Say, rather, that the well is a contraction of the cavern," I replied. "What an amazing thing it is, to be sure."

It was fortunate, very fortunate for us, that the eruption came just when it did, for it lighted up the entire cavern to the brightness of day, revealing a broad, level floor at no great distance below us, in the midst of which was the well, or pit, now increased to many times its cir-

cumference at the surface, communicating with unknown depths below.

The stone staircase which we had been following could be seen, some ten feet further down, to divide into two parts, one leading to the left and terminating at the floor of the cavern at a considerable distance from the well, the other leading directly to the mouth of the pit.

Had we been unfortunate enough to have chosen the right-hand stair we should have perished as sure as fate! I called Frank's attention to it, shudderingly.

"Luck's on our side, Charles," he answered, lightly. "See that big building down there cut out of the walls of the cavern? As soon as the fiery pillar retreats that must be the next point for which we strike." Even as he spoke the pillar began descending.

Slowly, very slowly, it dwindled and sank downward, until finally it retreated into the depths of the pit and wholly disappeared, the loud, roaring sounds which accompanied it dying away to a sullen murmur far below.

Hurrying down the steps, we took the left-hand turning, and soon our feet trod the cavern floor.

Waving our torches before us, we pressed on toward the great rock temple which Frank had discovered, reaching it a few moments later on.

"What a singular place!" I cried, trying to penetrate the gloom above us. "See, this building is cut out of the solid rock itself. It must have taken years to accomplish it, to say nothing of the number of men employed."

It was indeed a mighty structure. It rose, story upon story, far beyond where the sorry light of our torches enabled our eyes to reach. We went up a broad flight of steps, entering the temple through a gigantic arch. We beheld chamber after chamber and room after room, until we had visited all, and found them deserted.

It is true that we discovered the other end of the slide in one of the most spacious of the many apartments, but that was all.

Its termination was at the base of a hideous idol having two heads, four arms and as many legs.

I walked up to it and touched one of the hands. Before I had time to think I was clasped and being hugged to death. I made a sudden effort to break the hold, but in vain. I began to think I was lost, but, with one effort, I—woke up to find myself all tangled up in bedclothes.

A Bad Dream.

(By Moulton Walker, Ritzville, Wash.)

One night as I was lying in bed I heard a shriek, and, going to the door, I saw a man, dressed in red, running down the hall. I ran after him, but as he reached the stairs he stumbled and fell, and before he could get up again I was on top of him, but he struggled fiercely and finally got away. I ran after him for quite a while, and finally saw him enter a dark cave. I entered it also, and followed him. I then saw him turn into another passage, and, just as I was turning the corner, I was seized, and bound and gagged. Some men then carried me to where there was a fire. They then held a council. After that two men carried me to a place where there was a post. They tied me to this, and then piled a bundle of

wood at my feet and poured some kerosene on it. They then lit the wood, and, as I felt the fire touch my legs, I began to yell. With a start I awoke and found it was only a dream. After that I never went very far away from home.

The Mythical Wolves.

(By Willie Murray, Trinidad, Colo.)

I had received a pair of skates for Christmas, and, having skated all day, went home to bed, and this is my dream: I thought I was in a canyon surrounded by high mountains. I seemed to be on a pond, skating all alone, when a pack of wolves made after me. I skated with might and main. After skating what seemed to be ages, my legs refused to move, and the wolves came upon me. Suddenly the dream changed, and I felt myself falling over a cliff; down, down I went. I felt that I must be dashed to pieces, when I awoke, covered with perspiration. I was so scared I could not go to sleep. I guess turkey and a few other things had something to do with my dream.

A Strange Dream.

(By H. E. Roberts, Norfolk, Va.)

I had a very strange dream the other night. I dreamed that I saw a fine two-horse carriage come dashing up to our house, and a young man that was driving called to me to come on and get in. I did so, without seeming to think it unusual.

"You have been elected to make a speech," he said, as soon as I was comfortably seated. I felt greatly flattered, but perfectly willing to try my hand. We hadn't gone far before I noticed the road was covered with evergreens. I thought it looked pretty but did not ask why it was done.

Presently we got to a lovely grove of large trees. We got out and went over a large stile, up through a nice green lawn to a big brown house. I was met by the lady of the house, and asked up to a magnificent room to change my dress. It seemed that everything was done almost with the quickness of thought, after we got to the house, until I found myself standing on a kind of triumphal arch of cedars and all sorts of evergreens over me. For the first time I began to feel rather weak in the knees, but I decided that would never do. The people who had invited me there to speak for them evidently thought me endowed with some degree of nerve and native common sense. So I looked out over the sea of upturned faces (the crowd was large and people were still coming), smiled a faint smile, meant to be reassuring, and moistened my lips from a glass of water that stood on a small table near me. Then I bowed a regular Chesterfieldian sweep to the audience, and commenced:

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: I thank you for the honor you have done me by inviting me here to see your happy and inspiring faces. It would be a dull person indeed who could not find something important to say, with such an audience to address."

"With such an audience to address," screamed a big, green parrot that was swinging himself as best he could

in his cage that hung from a window of the house. I was silenced, for a thunder of applause greeted Polly mimicking my words. I stood paralyzed. I knew only too well that every word I said would be repeated as the parrot saw fit, but even in my dream I seemed to feel ashamed to be entirely and ingloriously routed by a bird.

So I braced myself as best I could and rapped with a gavel for silence. I had opened my mouth to speak, when, to my amazement, the parrot screamed: "Silence! Silence! You don't know anything. Hear me!" Then he piped out in a shrill, clear voice:

"Our human frame is so very small when we think of the enormous size of the world we live in. Yet! there is not one of us here this evening who has not felt that his, or her, heart was large enough to fill the whole thing up from the pearl-spangled sands at the bottom of the sea to the palest star that shines in the blue and gold arched firmament above us." The crowd seemed turned to statues, so still, so silent they remained; and the bird talked on, his head first on one side, then on the other. "One human heart can fill the universe with love or hate, with joy or sorrow, good or evil, as far as its possessor is concerned; so we think it would be next to divine if each one of us would resolve to let so large a heart be full of all that is good, and bright, and noble—so very full that nothing evil could possibly find the least room for a foothold there." The parrot stopped, fluttered its wings, then looked at itself over first one shoulder, then the other, saying: "Pretty polly, good bird! That is right. Pretty Polly wants a cracker!" This seemed to arouse the people, for they went wild; they stamped, clapped their hands, yelled, waved handkerchiefs, gave college whoops, until they must have satisfied so vain a bird as the parrot.

When silence was again restored, I was surprised to see bundles and packages falling all around me. I looked up. They seemed to be coming down from the skies. I opened them and found all sorts of beautiful presents. A large pink seashell fell at my feet, and a large, clear pearl rolled out of it. I picked it up, and held it so the crowd could see it, and the parrot screamed: "That is the pearl of great price. Keep it." And I waked up and the sun was shining in my face.

A Boy's Dream.

(By George C. Harvey, Lock Haven, Pa.)

After having eaten half of a pie, and reading till after midnight, to finish "The Hidden Treasure of Captain Rave," in which I was deeply interested, I went to bed and was soon asleep, and wading knee-deep in my adventures in search of hidden treasure. I will relate it in story form, as that is the most convenient way.

I dreamed that I found myself creeping stealthily along in a high, but narrow, cave, listening intently for the sound of the voices of a few rascally sailors, who, I knew, had also discovered the secret of the cave in which the private treasure was hidden, and which I had somehow or other discovered, although by no amount of thinking could I find out how I had done so.

My patience was soon rewarded by hearing the voices of my enemies. I found, by a shaft of light which is-

sued out of a doorway cut in the solid rock, that they were in a small branch of the cave.

In trying to get closer to the door to hear what the sailors were saying, my foot struck against the wall and a small slab of stone fell out.

Immediately after, there was a rustling of paper, and I stooped down and picked up a small parchment.

Then by the excited voices of the sailors and by hurried footsteps, I knew that I was discovered.

I then ran back as fast as I could for about a hundred yards and turned into a large branch of the cave, for the purpose of deceiving the sailors.

Then, impressed by the idea that I must make haste, I drew out the paper and a match, and, lighting the latter, I examined the paper, which was a chart of the cave.

I discovered that there was one main cave and some small branches, and that the one I was now in was marked with a cross.

At the bottom of the paper there was some cramped writing.

There were but a few words:

To the right, eight paces, thirteen to the left; center slab; press upper right corner.

At first I did not know what it meant.

Then it flashed across my mind that it was the directions to find the treasure.

I took the steps required, and at my feet I found that there were a number of slabs of stone, so placed that they would not be noticed unless they were searched for very carefully.

I pressed the center one, and it flew open, and I picked up a small leather bag, and, by feeling it, I knew it contained the diamonds. I also saw a number of larger bags, which I knew contained gold.

I crammed the bag into my pocket, for I heard steps approaching.

Some one grappled with me from behind, but I was getting the best of him when he called out:

"Help, mates. Help quick, or he'll get away."

He was then joined by a couple of his comrades. One of them gave me a push, and I fell over a precipice which was behind me, and I went down, down, down.

I fell with a thud, and awoke to find myself on the floor, and my brother standing above me, laughing heartily. He had tried to awaken me, but I fought him in my sleep.

The Sailor's Yarn.

(By Floyd G. Cullar, Osceola, Ind.)

One night last winter I was reading a book on whaling, in which were several sailors' yarns. When I went to bed I dreamed of being on a whaling vessel. We were about half full of oil and the captain wished to hurry up and get a good cargo before the other whalers came up to disturb us. I was one of the common sailors, and had to pull in one of the whale-boats. The harpooner on my boat was an old tar named Jack.

One day we made fast to a bull whale of an enormous size. He at once attacked the boat and smashed it into kindling wood with one blow of his tail. We were all thrown up in the air, but soon came down, and all but Jack were rescued. But where was Jack? We rowed all around, looking for him, and, at last, spied him swim-

ming toward us. When asked where he had been all that while, Jack told us this tale. Said he: "Well, when went up in the air I saw that whale's mouth open right under me. I came down and went down into it, and, the inside of his throat was slippery, I disappeared like a piece of cake in a family of children. Well, it was darker than a stack of black cats down there until struck some matches. Then I saw a square patch the starboard side of the whale's stomach. Going on to it I read these words, 'Jonah, 79 B. C.' printed there, Jonah's own handwriting with Inky ink. Well, when I saw that I felt pretty bad, so I took a chaw of fine tobacco to steady my nerves. I guess I spilled some, for the floor of the whale's stomach began to heave like a baby earthquake. I saw at once that the whale wasn't used to weed, so I took up a jackknife, which was lying there, and had the American eagle on one side and Jonah's picture on the other; and cut up a plug of navy bacco and scattered it around. After a while, another earthquake opened up under my feet, and I was thrown into the sea. You know the rest."

After Jack had finished his yarn, we rowed back to the ship, and, just as we reached it, I awoke.

LETTERS FROM PRIZE WINNERS.

TRINIDAD, COL., December 11, '02.

Street & Smith, New York City, N. Y.

DEAR SIR: I received my knife to-day, and am more than pleased with it, and thank you very kindly for it. I will try again soon and hope I will be as lucky again.

Yours respectfully,

WILLIE MURRAY.

SEEKONK, MASS.

Street & Smith, Publishers.

DEAR SIR: The hunter's ax received. Am delighted with it. Please accept my heartfelt thanks. I had no more idea of winning a prize than I did of flying. I have entered quite a number of contests, but have never won anything before. How can you give away such good hatchets for so little work? I have a catalogue at home here, from one of the largest commercial houses in Chicago, in which they have the same kind of hatchets. Their prices are from \$1.75 to \$2.25. Let me tell you that this hatchet will come in handy, for I go hunting quite often. Again, I say, I don't see how you can give away such good things for so little work. Well, I guess I have written enough for one time, and will close with many thanks, and also a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to Street & Smith.

Respectfully,

R. C. SKINNER.



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